

**Reason and Religion :**  
**IN SOME**  
**Useful Reflections**  
**On the Most**  
**Eminent *HYPOTHESES***  
**CONCERNING**  
**The First PRINCIPLES, and**  
**NATURE of THINGS.**  
**WITH**  
**ADVICE** suitable to the Subject,  
and Seasonable for these Times.

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**L O N D O N :**

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## THE P R E F A C E.

**T**IS bad, when Discourses to prove the Fundamentals of Religion are very seasonable, worse when they are necessary, but worst of all, when no Demonstrations or Endeavours can affect Men with a Sense of Piety. Which of these Characters our Age deserves, is left to the Judgment of the most Experienced: In the mean time, our continuing Essays to assign the Reasons of our Faith, ought to be thankfully acknowledg'd by all, as an Argument of our Hope and Charity.

## The PREFACE.

*The Design of the following Papers, is, after our Regards to the Preservation of Truth, to set upon the Irreligious in their own Fortresses, and turn to a good Use those Philosophical Reasons or Conjectures, which they have perverted: to what degrees of Humility this Method may reduce them, can only be foreseen by the Searcher of Hearts; the Good it hath done already, may be a propitious Omen to our future Expectations: and this we may reasonably suppose, that if it makes not every attentive Reader, how prejudic'd soever, more distrustful of his wicked Principles, it must make him more desperate and self-condemn'd.*

*Let no wicked Men pretend any Arguments hereafter used, are above their Reach and Capacity:*  
*The*

## THE PREFACE.

*The Method is neither confused, nor the Expression ambiguous ; and their taking no care to understand them, must be look'd upon as a Token of great folly : for such it must be, to entertain Prejudices against God, without knowing the utmost that can be said for our Respects to him ; or referr'd to Diabolical Instinct, drawing them off from THE TRUE ORACLES OF REASON, to listen to Impostures. Such British Infidels deserve not the Treatments of Humanity : When the Head infects the Heart, the Disease will bear Argumentative Prescriptions ; but when the Corruptions of the Heart infect the Head, some sharper course must be taken with them.*

*May G O D of his Mercy so guide us all to, and in our Endeavours after a true Reformation,*

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*that undissembled Holiness may  
adorn his Church, and the Blessings  
of his Love be a lasting Protection  
to it.*

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**Reason**

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## Reason and Religion.

**A**LL our Discourses of GOD, and Enquiries about his Holy Nature, ought to be attended with Caution and Respect, least we derogate from the Excellencies of the best Being, have our Minds overcast with the most dangerous Errors, and wander out of the way of our principal Interest. We are placed, by the Divine Ordination, in a part of the World, where in we have a moderate competency of Light and Knowledge: and our distance from the Fountain of Glory is not so great, but the Irradiations we have from it may enliven our Hopes, and guide our Endeavours in aiming and aspiring to it. If we are faithful unto our own Faculties, and employ our Time and our Judgment in gathering into the Mind the scat-

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tered Rays and Principles of Heavenly Light, their united power will frame us into a Divine Temper, and sublimate our Nature for nearer Accesses unto God : but if we bend intirely unto the Earth, and suck our Notions and Nourishment from the same place, our Minds must labour under the Dominion of corrupt and cloudy Principles, which will carry us further from God, and make even this Earth too happy an Habitation for us.

The first and principal of all Sacred Truths, to be considered, is, the Existence of God : and tho' no Principles or Hypothesis lead altogether to the denial of God ; yet we have reason to fear, that the strange and irreligious Practises of Men do spring from some naughty and irreligious Perswasions ; and that their Thoughts of God (if they have any) have but little root.

It may not be amiss therefore, to be helpful to any Men who will give themselves the liberty of thinking, that they may make the best even of bad Principles, and be able from any  
Hypo-

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Hypothesis to infer the Necessity of the Divine Nature.

There are Three Opinions which may occur to us in the Contemplations of Nature: Either, *First*, That this World was framed and fashioned into this admirable State, by an Eternal Mind and Wisdom. Or, *Secondly*, That it had a Beginning from the fortuitous Motions and Combinations of blind and unguided Matter. Or, *Thirdly*, That it hath been from Eternity, in the same State that we have at present. Some Reflections on the two last, which are the usual Retirements of Infidelity, may not improperly follow a general Confirmation of the Truth in the first Hypothesis.

In the building up, and forming of a Religious Life, 'tis fit we should lay a good Foundation; arguing first from the Principles of Truth, and then from the Principles of Men.

1. Our first Essay shall be therefore to prove the Existence of an Eternal Mind and Wisdom: by whose  
Power

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Power the Universe was produced, and on whose Guidance its Order doth depend. And this may be perform'd, by demonstrating the Existence of some Eternal Being, and by discovering the Properties thereof.

1. That something is Eternal, is as certain, as that any thing exists at present: and none can doubt of it, but on the same ground that he shall doubt, whether in every Triangle, if one Angle be right, the other two shall be acute: *i. e.* for want of a little thinking, and rightly attending to the force and signification of Terms: For, either every thing is Eternal, or something, or nothing. If you modestly allow something to be Eternal, you are certainly in the right. If you say every thing is Eternal, you decline something from it: but if you say nothing is Eternal, you get into the Angle of Error, at farthest distance from the right, and wound your Reason with the most pungent Absurdity.

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Whatsoever is not Eternal, must have a beginning : whatsoever hath a beginning, must have it either from itself, from something else, or nothing. That any thing should give beginning to itself, is very absurd : for that which gives beginning being a precedent Cause, a thing must be, and not be, at the same time ; must be before it had a beginning, must be the Cause and the Effect, must give beginning to that which had a beginning before, &c. That a thing may have its beginning from something else, is true ; but then that which gives a beginning, must either have its own beginning from itself, ( if it have any ) and then the former Absurdities will recur : or from something else, and that from another, and so in *infinitum*, that is, from Eternity. And to say, that any thing can have its beginning from nothing, is either to reconcile Contradictions, to make something and nothing, cause and no cause, positive and negative the same ; or to speak a great Truth, for that which hath its beginning from nothing.

thing, hath no beginning, and must be Eternal.

Now before we ascend to the Properties of an Eternal Being, we may do well to stop a-while in the Contemplation of Eternity itself: for our intent being declared, of evincing the Existence of an Incomprehensible Being, we must not lose our advantage of any Truth in itself most certain, yet to us incomprehensible. Those therefore who imagine they sufficiently disprove Religion, by reducing its Maintainers to a Mystery, will see little reason for their Triumph, when they find in any case, that nothing is more certain than that which is most mysterious. Take the Instance before us: We cannot be more ascertain'd of our own Existence, than of something's existing from Eternity: but when we apply our finite Thoughts, to an infinite Duration, how do we lose our selves in this vast Ocean? How do our proud Pretences unto Comprehension fail. Had *Mesbusalem*, instead of 900, lived 900000 Years, and spent his Time in no other Employment but

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but the Multiplication of Numbers, which in the short running of a Pen, 79543285012759021899723109235 72813709280639275458367689542 83159473890928446732197836290 75389259306518973259076825, &c. amount to an unconceivable Sum, and an astonishing Duration, especially if you measure by the Great Year, he had been no nearer expressing the proper extent of Eternity, than if he had said nothing. And what a strange, prodigious, wonderful, suprarational, mysterious, incredible, incomprehensible Thing is this! How does this baffle the vain Essays of Men, to measure Eternity by mutable Motion and Succession! How may this convince us, that the readiest way of fixing in the Mind an undeceiving Idea of Eternity, is not by running over Millions and Millions of Ages, but to abide at the first Point, the most comprehensive Power and Point of Unity; and restraining the Mind from irregular rambling, to keep it stable and permanent, as Eternity itself is, in an indivisible Duration. If you say this likewise

wise is very mysterious, (as the Truth and Certainty of it we reserve to be debated in another Paragraph, so) we reply, That either you must allow something mysterious, or deny the Existence of all Things, and Truth of all Propositions. The Universal Creed of Mankind establishes and imposes Truths incomprehensible. We have no need then (as you see) to be ashamed of laying the Foundations of Piety, in a Doctrine mysterious and incomprehensible: something or other must be so, because Eternal, and what that is will best be discover'd, when

II. The Properties and necessary Attributes of the Eternal Being come to be examin'd, and they will be evinced to be especially Four, Cogitation, Immensity, Immutability and Perfection.

I. That Cogitation with the Fruits of it, Knowledge, Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness, must have existed somewhere or other from Eternity, will appear from the Difference between

tween external and internal Qualities.

External Qualities, as whiteness, smoothness, ponderosity, and the like may result from the agreeableness and actions of one sensible thing upon another : and a wise Being knowing what will arise from the various Modifications of Matter, may produce some external Qualities, Appearances, or Colours, which never were in the World before : Now that which may be produced a-new, and is not a derivation from another of the same kind, need not be Eternal. But mental and internal Qualities are of another kind ; when they are produced, they are produced by something like themselves : thought cannot be produced, as whiteness and the like are, by the mixtures, motions, and contemperings of meer Matter ; but thro' the several Gradations of Time, and Series of Productions, you may trace the same Quality both in the Effect and Cause, till at last you must acknowledge it Eternal.

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To render this Argumentation more perspicuous and firm, revolve in your Mind how unlikely it is, that Thought should not be Eternal: how impossible it is, if not Eternal, that it should ever be at all: and that there is not one Instance assignable in Nature, of the Production of Thought, but from a Thinking Principle.

That Thought, the most excellent Quality in the Universe, should be but of yesterday's starting up: that all the World should lie for Eternal Ages in confused Horror and Darkness, under the Dominion of hideous Disorder, in an apprehension so unlikely and dismal, that nothing but the Shades of the most wretched Ignorance and Prejudice against God can support its Credibility. But if the natural Traduction of the most Glorious Light from Eternal Obscurity, of the most exquisite Knowledge from Eternal stupidity and dulness, with the commensurateness of the vilest State, to the most excellent Duration, be not Absurdities sufficient to startle our Pretenders unto Sense: if they

they think it enough for them to ground their Arguments, with the Value and Weal of their Souls, on bare Possibilities, and expect Impossibilities, or Arguments *ab impossibilibus*, that it should be otherwise from us, we will indulge their Humour: and when they can once prove it possible for Thought to be otherwise than Self originated, we will venture to be sceptical as well as they. In the mean time we observe in all Emanations, Issues, and Effects a congruity in Kind and Temper to the Spring, Causality, and Parentage from whence they come. The whole World is a circulation of like from like. The Vegetable Nature propagates itself by Vegetative Seeds and Principles. The Sensitive Life is form'd, animated, and organized by homogeneous Powers: the business of equivocal Generations being now justly exploded. And must not those Men deserve very meanly of Humane Nature, who would derive our original from any thing below ourselves, as tho' Thought need not come from a Thinking, nor Rational



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nal Faculties from a Rational Source, but might easily be attracted from the solar impregnation of a little Slime and Dung, which is not able to produce a Worm or an Insect? We might resent the Reproach they bring upon our Nature, by making themselves worse than Beasts: but because they knew themselves best, and may be bold in Self-censures, they must not use the same freedom with all Mankind.

It remains then, that Thought is a Derivation either to Man from Man, or from a superiour Mind, and is therefore eternal.

There is no Remedy then against the Belief of an Eternal Mind. The difficulty which some Mens Hearts may suggest, is, where, to what Object, or Being, or rank of Beings to apply and fix this unavoidable Belief. We might proceed to the other Properties of an Eternal Being, for the determination of this, were it not fit to pursue this Property of Cogitation, as far as it will lead us to the knowledge of God.



1. Some may vainly seek for this Eternal Cogitation in the Successions of Humane Nature; and indeed, if all Mankind were acted by the same Soul, and all the various appearances and workings among us were no other than the various operations of this universal Soul, according to the different Capacities and Aptitude of Matter it co-operates with, it would be something to that purpose, tho' not to theirs. But to believe, as we must, that Men have so many individual distinct Souls, and yet to expect an Eternity of Thought among them, must be grounded on these two Suppositions: That it is possible the Successions of Men should be eternal. And, That they actually are so. Which in the sequel of this Discourse will appear incredible.

2. If Eternity of Thought must necessarily be acknowledged in some Being or Beings, Mankind, in the lowest supposition, cannot have the only Title and Claim unto it. To monopolize Cogitation and Reason  
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to our selves is the greatest arrogance in Nature. 'Tis certain, that not only the Earth, but all included in the circumference of its motion about the Sun, bear no sensible proportion to the rest of the World: And shall we vain Wretches, who creep upon this point, called in our high Conceits the *Terrestrial Globe*, fancy that all the Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge are lodged among us? Why might not the poor Inhabitants of a Mole-hill enter their Pretensions to universal Thoughtfulness, and desire all Policy, all Care or Providence besides their own? And yet hundreds of them are blown away by the Breath of our Mouths, put by all their plodding and politicks, and perish in the surprizing desolation of their Country, if we turn but our Foot against them. And does not a Mole-hill bear as considerable a proportion to the Earth, as the Earth to the Universe? And must not we be esteemed as inconsiderable, when compared with the larger Capacities and Extent of Thought in superiour Beings, as inferiour Beings are when  
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compared to us? The most irreligious Hypothesis must admit and confirm this. And those Persons certainly have little concern for their Souls, who will venture their Happiness on this Presumption, That there are no cogitative intelligent Beings in the Universe besides Mankind.

3. And if Men cannot be so silly as to imagine, when they contemplate the glorious Habitations above us, that there is not some Being or Beings endowed with more excellent degrees of Thought and Wisdom than themselves are; the force of the same Reason which extorts this Confession from them will lead them unto God. For let a Man seriously consider with himself in this manner; There certainly is some more wise and excellent Being than my Senses can discover, or than sensual Men are aware of; and the Ground of his so believing will be plainly this. He finds himself in a pitiful and mean condition, compared with the glorious appearances of the Universe. He perceives he is not the cause of all the  
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derful Works, nor the Contriver of all the regular Motions, nor the Continuer of all the harmonious and beautiful Operations which the visible Creation presents us with. And were a Man supposed to have the Wisdom of an Angel, the same Considerations will naturally recur to him. An Angel hath neither Thought nor Wisdom proportionable to the Magnitude and Glories of the World, capable of framing the order of its Parts, and fit for managing the Affairs of the Whole; and must therefore in humility look out, as we do, for a Being superiour and more skilful than himself: and whatsoever that Being is, which could frame, manage, and order this vast Fabrick of the World, in it our Expectations of the most comprehensive Thought and Wisdom must terminate at last, and this is G O D.

This Proof of an Eternal Intelligence having a largeness of Thought, and by consequence all other Excellencies, infinitely surpassing ours, might suffice any reasonable Enquirer into our Belief of God: but be-  
cause

cause it may be expected from us to consider the above-mentioned Attributes or Properties of an Eternal Being, we shall from them bring some concurring Evidence and Strength unto our holy Cause.

II. Immensity is the next Attribute of an Eternal Being. For, since 'tis acknowledged on all sides, that there is something immense or without Bounds, it is impossible that that should grow immense by time, which was not so from Eternity. Nay, the same Reasons which prove an immense Being now, are of an eternal Validity. As, whatsoever is bounded is bounded by something else ; and whatsoever that is which bounds the Extremities, or fixes the Limits, of all things bounded, must of itself have no Bounds at all. Thus that which proves an immense Being at present proves the same from Eternity.

And here we might digress in the contemplation of another mysterious Truth, did not the usefulness of this Truth call more immediately for our Regards and Improvement.

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Our chief difficulty to be resolved here, is, what is this Immense Being: and there are no other conceivable Opinions for it, than that it must be either such a gross Substance as we call Matter, or such a fine and pure Substance as we call Spirit, or an empty Space: either Matter, Spirit, or Space, or altogether must be Immense.

1. That an empty space should be Immense, can by no means be allowed: tho' the Atomical Hypothesis would suppose it. Space and Time are but Modes of Existence; the one commensurate to the Motion of Substances, the other to their Magnitude. Our best Divines and Philosophers agree in this, That where there is no Body, there is no Space. At least this is evident, that an empty Space is but another Name for nothing. And when you say an empty Space is Immense, you say, nothing is Immense: which is an absurd predicating something of nothing, or a contradiction to the precedent proof.

2. That

2. That Matter, or this material World, should be immense, is extraordinary astonishing, if not impossible. An indefinite extension we can admit: For which of us shall nominate the Bounds of the Divine Operations? But an infinite Extension, the divisibility of a material Being will exclude: For whatsoever is divisible into parts, is bounded in all its parts; and whatever is bounded in all its parts, must needs be bounded in the whole, or have ends without end: which looks very like a Contradiction. Besides,

If a Line be drawn from this Point © ascending, and may in the progress of material parts be continued in *infinitum*, and the same Line drawn descending through the Centre of the Earth to our Antipodes, or (if you will) in *infinitum*; on the other side, from hence will follow: 1. That the ascending Line shall have as many parts as the ascending and descending put together. 2. That of two Lines, one shall have 10000 parts more than another, and yet they



shall be both equal ; equal both as to the length and number of parts.

3. That if you add 10000 parts to your ascending Line, it hath never the more; and if you subtract 10000 it hath never less.

4. That if you subtract any conceivable number from the ascending Line, it shall have as many parts, not only as it had, but as the subtraction, and ascending, and descending put together, and even as the Superficies and solid Content. And what is this, but to make the part as big as the whole, the Line equal to the Superficies, to confound our clearest Notions of Distance and Magnitude ; and an hundred such Absurdities may be recounted, which if you are disposed to Scepticism, may make you very doubtful how you attribute Immensity unto Matter.

3. And if we must attribute Immensity to some Substance, but not to such a gross one as is divisible into parts, then we must attribute it to some Substance of a purer kind : that hath no parts, and is absolutely indivisible. Having removed the two  
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former Opinions, we thereby establish the third.

The Substance to which we attribute Immensity, we commonly call Spirit: but because words are assum'd by the Consent and Approbation of Men, we will have no quarrel about that: being willing to allow you, and every Son of *Adam*, the Authority and Privilege, of calling Things by what Names you please: but when we appropriate the word Spirit to the signification of the Divine Nature, we mean no other than an immense Substance, distinct from this visible, divisible, and material World.

If you say, you can have no conception of this immense Spirit, and can much easier conceive this World to be immense, 'tis answer'd,

1. That with the same facility that you conceive the Earth to be circumscribed, you may conceive the Limits of the Universe. The small Globe on which we live, giving us the Idea of one prodigiously greater.

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2. That,

2. That, whatever you may say or fancy, you cannot conceive material Immensity at all : for you cannot conceive any material Magnitude to which something may not be added ; and that Magnitude to which Thought can always add something, must necessarily be conceived with its Bounds and Limits.

3. If this World be immense, not only we, but the wisest and most excellent Beings in the Universe, (except an immense Spirit, which we are contending for) cannot possibly conceive what it is, or tell what to make of it. For a finite Spirit, tho' coeternal with the World, might spend Millions and Millions of Ages, in travelling through the infinite Apartments and Habitations therein, and come never the nearer his Journey's-end ; nor be able to inform himself what manner of Thing the World, in all its parts, is. Nay, two finite Spirits might travel Millions of Ages with exceeding velocity each toward other, and that in the same  
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right Line, and never meet. Why will you say then, 'tis so easie to conceive this World immense, when on the supposal of its Immensity, none, but an infinite Spirit; either by his own peregrination, or experience, or information from others, can possibly know or conceive what it is.

4. The conception of an Infinite or Immense Spirit, is not clogg'd with any of these Difficulties: for, conceiving this World, as having its Fences and Bounds put to it, by an Almighty Power, and shaped into the most perfect, that is a Spherical Figure; whatsoever we conceive beyond that, that is, beyond all Bounds, must needs be Immense. And there our Minds must presently fix, without any rambling or indefinite Excursions: the Majesty of God swallowing up all our Thoughts at once, and allowing us no material steps, no divisible progressions to go on further by. God give a Blessing to these Thoughts; which proving an eternal and immense Substance, and excluding this visible and material

World from any Claim thereto, leads us to the acknowledgment of his spiritually immense and undivided Essence.

III. Immutability is another Attribute of an Eternal Being, which we shall endeavour in this Paragraph to explain and prove.

By Immutability we mean, not only exemption from change in Mind, Manners, and Conduct, as we have it in ordinary Affairs, but such a stable, unaltering continuance as is not liable to the Causes or Symptoms of Change; that is, Motion or Succession. Many are the Disputes hereupon; Whether Eternity be a thing fixt and immutable, or transient and successive. The Prejudices of this irreligious Age, affect the Minds even of the Religious, and make them shy of asserting that with any confidence, which others have the Impudence to laugh at. Who is there that is not almost willing to confess, \* *Boetius's* Definition of Eternity, a pious Whim, a well-meaning Extravagance; and yield Eternity to

\* *Eternitas est interminabilis vita tota simul & perfecta possessio. De Consolat. l. 5.*

to be a duration of infinite Successions. In opposition to which we need not be afraid to state these Assertions.

All Successions are finite. Nothing which hath any Changes, Motions, or Successions, can be eternal. Eternity must be something stable, simple, indivisible and immutable.

And here we might be contented to shew you, that this Immutability of the Eternal Being, and therefore of Eternity itself, will follow from the former Paragraph: for, a spiritually, immense, or indivisible Being, must have an indivisible Duration. Where there is no succession of Parts, for the measuring of Magnitude, there can be no Variations or Motions to measure Duration by; but because it is best, when each particular Paragraph hath strength of itself, without needing to have recourse to what went before, especially in Arguments of this moment, therefore consider further.

I. That no Numbers, Successions, or Periods of Time can be an ade-

quate measure of Eternity, or bring us any thing nearer to a notion of it. Which certainly those People do not rightly weigh, who wonder that we have not a larger date of time from the Sacred Writings than 5000 or 6000 years. They think surely the World is of a much older standing than so, though they will not be positive for its Eternity. But when they revolve in their Minds, that the further they go on in the numeration of Years or Ages, they come never the nearer to Eternity ; that a Minute bears as considerable a proportion to Eternity as Ten thousand millions of Ages ; their Wonder will be over, and they will perceive it is the same thing, whether they consider the World as many millions of Years old, or in the very moment of its Creation.

That Duration then, which cannot be made either longer or shorter, by any additions or subtractions, which cannot be measured by any periodical Revolutions, can have no Parts. Like is measured by like : Our partible Times and Seasons are  
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measured by partible and successive Motions: and our Thoughts applying the one to the other, can add or substract as we see good. Add 366 diurnal courses of the Sun to a Thousand Years, and it makes the whole duration a Year longer. But the Eternal Being is the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever: not older to day than a Thousand years ago; nor will be older a Thousand years hence: for that which by descending grows older and older, by ascending will prove younger and younger. But no duration can be older or longer than Eternity: nor younger, or of a fresher date, if it be eternal. Which shews, That Eternity is another kind of a Duration from our Times, and the Eternal being different from every thing that is changeable and various; and having no parts or periods applicable to it, give us leave to say, possesses the same never-ending Life with equal perfection and stability, thro' all Ages.

2. Many are the Absurdities which follow from the supposal of infinite Successions; for the right apprehending



ding which take these two Admonitions along with you. *First*, That of Successions or Numbers infinite, one is not greater or less than another: For wherein soever one Number or Succession is greater or exceeded by another, therein you suppose one of them to be finite. *Secondly*, That what is positively true in one Age, the circumstances continuing always alike, must be true to Eternity. Their Use follows. Have there then, say you, been infinite Successions, and the Generations of Men and Beasts, the Vicissitudes of Night and Day, of Summer and Winter, Times and Seasons, from Eternity; then eying the first Admonition, from hence will follow, that there have been as many Heads as Hands, as many Hands as Fingers, as many Fingers as Joynts, as many Men as Men and Beasts put together, as many Beasts as Beasts and Men put together, as many Birds as Feathers, as many Birds as Men, Beasts, Birds, Hairs, Feathers put together; as many Ages as Years, as many Years as Months, Weeks, Days, Hours, Minutes, &c. If



If you are disposed to draw back, and care not to let down these monstrous Consequences, you must likewise relinquish the Principle, from whence they so evidently flow: For if there have not been as many Heads as Hairs, &c. then the Generations of Men must be finite; and reckonink Men by the Poll, as much as the number of Men is surpassed by Hands, Hairs, &c. so much at least they fall short of Infinity: But if you have Courage to defend these Consequences, and will run all hazards on this supposition, that there have been as many Heads as Hands or Hairs; then we must direct the second Admonition against you thus. If in this Age, or the compass of a Thousand Years, there are more Hairs than Heads, more Years than Minutes, &c. then ascend or descend as far as you can, or as far as it is possible there should be these Successions, and their number must be constantly unequal. And since your Infinity equals all things, in these successive Generations or Seasons there can be no progression to it.

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We might produce you great store of like Absurdities, if your Stomach would bearthem. But those abovementioned will try the Strength of your digestive faculty: and it maybe hoped the operation they will have may prove rather medicinal than noxious, and carry off with themselves this Fancy of Infinite Successions, with other gross Humours, which while they lurk in the Mind, distemper its Constitution.

3. The force of the former Arguments, for the immutability of the Eternal Being, will more clearly appear, by a good refutation of the chief Objection to it. It must be expected, that Irreligious Men will have something to say, though it be little to the purpose. And that they may not complain of wanting a fair hearing, the utmost that the Wit of Man can invent, shall now be considered. They may say, There have been Infinite Successions past, as well as there will be in the times and duration to come: and as we believe the Sun, and Moon, and Men may endure for ever, so whatever we may ob-

object against their existing from Eternity, will be as strong against our Belief of their existing to Eternity.

Many Answers, were we pinched with this Objection, might be made to it; but how formidable soever it may look, there are especially two, which may be freely given by us, and may be satisfactory to you.

I. Men, it is true, and other things may endure for ever, but not in the way of Succession and Generation.

As we believe a first Man, so we believe a last; and, when the times appointed by the Almighty shall be fulfilled, a stop shall be put unto the Generations of Men. There shall be no further progress in the propagation of their kind. We wait for the accomplishment of God's Elect: and the Promise of such a state, when it shall be no longer with Men as it is here on Earth: when there shall be no marrying nor giving in Marriage, the distinctions of Youth and Old-age, of Great and Small, of Generation

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 ration and Corruption, being done  
 away.

The like may be said of the Sun and Moon : For tho' they be faithful Witnesses in Heaven, and serve for the distinctions of Times and Seasons, Days and Years, yet we also wait for their dissolution ; the final conflagration will put a period to their Motions, close up their Successions, level all their Changes, and the Revolutions of their time will be swallowed up in Eternity : and the same that we say of the Periods allotted to the Sun, may be applied to the rest of the Stars, either alternately, or altogether, as it shall please God to order it.

So far we labour under no great Difficulties : what we have objected to your Infinite Successions doth not affect us. For, as we believe a beginning of the Generations of Men, of Night and Day, of Summer and Winter, so we believe an end of them. But we may Answer,

II. There is a great difference between Eternity and Perpetuity : or  
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between that Duration which is comprehensive of all Time, and that which is only comprehensive of the Time to come. That Duration which hath no beginning must be Infinite: but that Duration which hath a beginning must be Finite, take what measure you will of it. There can be no Infinite Number, and therefore no Successions, which we contend for, and which we measure by Number, can be Infinite, tho' they endure for ever. *Eternity à parte post* (as they call it) hath for ever an End, because it hath a Beginning: but absolute Eternity having no Beginning, hath no End. It will be very convenient to make this as plain as may be; because it may seem strange, and is really, if true, of considerable importance.

Begin any Succession with the number One, and go on adding (as it may be) as fast as the Succession happens: and because numbers may be continually added, if the Succession shall last for ever, it shall for ever be Finite. Your Succession having a Beginning, you can for ever measure

sure it by a Number : and coming back when you will, you can for ever come to an End. Suppose this the first year of the Sun's enlightning the Earth : and this annual course was to remain for ever : and the Reader of this Book appointed, by the King of Heaven, as an Everlasting Register of Times and Seasons : he may easily be sensible that he hath no very difficult Employment ; one day at most in Ten thousand Years would be sufficient for it. His Marks and Numbers may be as comprehensive as he pleases : he can always add his Numbers as the Ages go off, and for ever prove them Finite, (as every Number in Reason must be, and) even visibly, by having recourse unto his first point. You therefore do greatly err, if you fancy as much may be said for clearing Absurdities from Successions eternally past, as from Successions in the after-Eternity. Because tho' you think Ascending and Descending from a Point given may be the same, yet it is not. Ascending from a Point given in Successions which have no beginning,

ginning, you come to no end in the Ascent, and have only a supposed one to ascend from, ( Eternity being still Current ) and therefore have no end at all : But in descending in the after-Eternity you have a real Beginning to descend from, and come back to; and therefore where-ever you stop, you have two Ends, and your Succession is for ever numerable and finite.

More may be said for clearing this Objection, but this doubtless is sufficient: for if Successions of Night and Day, or even of Thought, the utmost that can be made of it shall last for ever, they shall be for ever finite, as we say, because these Successions shall for ever have a beginning, and may be numbred: they may be perpetual, but not properly eternal. Or, we may justly question, whether any Successions shall last for ever or no: and if there be occasion we can positively deny it.

Could any other Objection to the Immutability of the Eternal Being, be imagined worth answering, it should have its place here. But, the main



main Fortrefs being broken, other little Refuges of Infidelity will fall of courfe. And if, as it hath been proved, the common Succeffions and Changes of the World cannot have been from Eternity, then that which is eternal muft be a Being, as Eternity itfelf is, without parts, divifion, or mutability. Would you be help'd to fome notion of this, fhut your Eyes to, and draw off your Mind from all corporeal Changes and Succeffions, and think of an eternally-current Unity, and you are not very far from it.

III. Perfection is the laft Attribute of an Eternal Being, which we are to fpeak of. And, as on the one fide he looks with very little Judgment on this vifible World, who paffing thro' the feveral ranks and gradations of Beings in it, is not enclin'd to the belief of one moft perfect; fo on the other, the moft perfect Duration muft have a compleatnefs of all Excellencies; and it is not to be imagined, that an Eternal Being fhould acquire Perfections in Time which it had not from Eternity.

Bet.

Better and better includes worse and worse, and these Differences succeeding in an Eternal Being, suppose a liableness to all possible Alterations; which is the linking of things incompatible, Perfection and Imperfection, Eternity and Alteration together.

To fix this Attribute of Perfection in the general Compages of the Universe, is very absurd; as if that could be truly perfect, taken altogether, which hath many Imperfections in its several parts: as sin and wickedness, deviation from what is right and good, grievous corruptions and continual changes: and if these visible Imperfections put together, can never be constitutive of Perfection, then we must lodge Perfection in some invisible Being, supremely excellent, having no Corruptions, no Changes; that is, no Imperfections in his Nature.

Besides, Perfection is properly a Collection and Summing-up of the other above-mention'd Attributes; and resulting from their several particular Powers or Branches, is best pro-

proved by them. If there be an eternally cogitative Being, he must be eternally wise ; and Wisdom being the Spring and General Root of other blessed Qualities, he must be likewise just and good. If there be an Immense Being, he must be Omnipotent : If a Being Immutable, he must possess perfect Simplicity, Purity and Holiness ; that is,

The Eternal Being must have a perfect Union of all Blessed Qualities in his Nature ; of Wisdom, Justice, Goodness, Power, and Holiness, and this is G O D.

Our Argumentation hath hitherto proceeded on the irrefragable Principles of Truth. Some Men may cavil at the whole, but can find no flaw in its connection, no weakness in the parts ; and it carries this advantage along with it, that if it be false, nothing can be proved true ; and if it be true, all contrary Opinions or Pretences must be necessarily false : whereby it may seem superfluous to consider any other Hypothesis, being assur'd of the Truth

of

of this ; as it would indeed, were it not for the Anticipations crept into Mens Minds, from which they are not so effectually driven by any sudden violence, unless supernatural, as gradually wean'd from. And what follows, is an Indulgence of their Humour ; not constrain'd by any necessity, but conceded for the present hardness of their Hearts. It may please God to open their Eyes for discerning his heavenly Truth, when they are a little suffer'd to go on in their own ways : like the Prodigal Son, they may deem it most expedient to return to their Father's House, when after various Perplexities they find their own extravagant Inventions conspiring to bring them to it. 'Tis a present Unhappiness to be involved in Error ; but 'tis no great matter where we begin to get out of it, or what Dangers and Byways we travel thro', if we recover the right at last, and come in Season and Safety unto our Journeys-end.

**II. Having**

II. Having in the former part clear'd the first Hypothesis, and set the Principles of Truth in a competent Light, we shall now undertake to render the Patrons of Infidelity self-condemn'd, and destroy their Presumption, even by their own Principles.

I. Let us begin with that fancy unaccountably invented for freeing Mankind from the Fear of God, by supposing this World derived its Original from the fortuitous Motions of eternal and unguided Matter. By what fortuitous Rovings of the Mind, the Defenders of this Opinion first hit upon it, is almost as unconceivable as the Opinion itself; and its ever entering into the Heart of Man, is the best Argument that can be made for it. Nothing may seem advanced above the Power of Chance; and one would imagine, innumerable Thoughts might have an eternal Rendezvous in the Soul, and never combine or jump into such a Principle. To instance in the Absurdities following from it, would be labour

bour in vain: And if any in this Age are so void of Reason as to be taken with that which hath not so much as the Appearance of it, there is no direct way of arguing with such People: And it shews the deplorable Depravation of some Mens Natures, who rather than believe in God, will believe any thing. Should any have this Fancy running in their head, That all the Churches in the Nation grew out of the Earth, like Mushromes in one night; or that \* all the Ships in an Harbour did arise from the Froth and Ebullitions of the Sea, it would not be agreeable to the Profession of a Philosopher to undertake their Cure. We may pity or smile at the Foolishness of the Fancy, but cannot help it. But as Persons not endowed with the firmest Judgment are best dealt with by complying with their Humour, by supposing as they do, That a blind impotent Wretch, for instance, is the most powerful Prince living, thereby to draw them off from an extravagant and harmful pursuance of their Fancies; so if any ones Reason have come by such an unhappy chance, that nothing can make him believe otherwise

C

than

\* As several  
believed  
Sir Francis  
Drake's  
Ships in  
1588 did  
arise from  
Chips  
thrown in-  
to the Wa-  
ter.

than that blind Matter and Motion are the only powerful forming Principles of Things, the only Kindness he is capable of; that he may not pursue this Persuasion to his utter Perdition, is, for a while to suppose as he does, and to try if by any other means he may be kept within some Bounds of Respect unto a superiour Being. And,

I. When they think of this Opinion, they may do well to think of the Authors of it; who, as far as we can learn, unanimously professed their Belief of a Divine Nature.

What *Moschus* the *Tyrian*, who is supposed to live before the *Trojan War*, \* and to maintain the Atomical Hypothesis, thought of God, we have no Account of. *Strabo* does but just mention him; and that with great Uncertainty. Nor have we any Probabilities to persuade us, either from the Time or Place in which he lived, that his Head was repleat with such a Scheme of Opinions as the following Dealers in Atoms had; at least, we cannot think him worse than † *Empe-*

• *Strabo*  
*Geogr.* l. 16.

† *Plutarch*  
*de Plac.*  
*Phil.* l. 1.  
e. 13. *Hier.*

*in Aur. Car.* p. 253. *Cic. de Nat. Deor.* l. 1. The Testimony of *Theophilus* against *Empedocles*, we cannot allow, which you have *ad Autolyicum* l. 3. for he says as bad of the *Stoicks* l. 2. and may be balanced, in behalf of *Empedocles*, by *Athenagoras*, *Lactantius*, and other Christians.

*doles,*



docles, \* Democritus, and † Epicurus, who are all of them very free in their Discourses of a Divine Nature.

\* Diog. Laert. in vitâ  
Plut. de Pla. Phil. l. 1.  
c. 5. Cic. de Nat. Deor.  
l. 1.  
† Laert. in vitâ.

Lucretius || might speak for them all, did not Epicurus himself give us this Profession of his Faith in God:

|| Omnis enim per se divinum natura necesse est immortalis ævo summa cum pace fruatur. l. 1.  
& alibi.

That God is a Blessed and Immortal Being; and that he is not impious who denies the Gods of the Multitude, but he who applies the Notions of the Multitude unto God. Many indeed who have jump'd in with the Hypothesis of Epicurus, have led Lives unworthy of his Patern, and spoke more slightingly of Matters which we ought to revere, than he did. But, must it not be very incongruous to follow such Leaders in their Dance in the Dark, through the Eternal Windings and Revolutions of Matter and Motion, and yet leave them when they come out of this Maze, and speak something like themselves of an Immortal Being.

\* Laert. in vitâ.

† Laert. in vitâ, & Seneca Oſten.

2. Nor do the Words only, but the very Principles of these Men, who have spoke so much of Atoms, Matter, and Motion, lead unto the Belief of God.

\* Cic. de  
Nat. Deor.  
l. 2.

† Plutarch  
against the  
pleasant  
Life of Epi-  
curus.

¶ *Declinando faciunt  
primordia motus princi-  
pium quoddam quod fati  
futura rumpat. Lucret.*  
l. 2. Cic. de Fato.

\* Diog. Laert. in Epi-  
curus.

'Tis true, it hath been objected to them, that they do, after some sort, deny \* the Existence of God, that is, by Consequence; or, that they owned and professed it only as they joyn'd in Religious Rites, † for fear of the Multitude. But you will not think the Objection sufficient to prove them such great Hypocrites, when you consider their Zeal to prove the Existence

of some || certain Principle, which is able to break the Fetters and Power of Fate; and that Epicurus \* himself says, 'Tis much better to believe all the Fabulous Re-

lations of the Heathen Deities, than to suppose our selves under the Servitude and Dominion of natural Fatality.

'Tis, indeed, a Difficulty in that Hypothesis not easily to be digested, That such rational Creatures as we take our selves to be, should be under the Tyranny of circumambient Matter: That we who sometimes have proud Thoughts of our selves, and look with Disdain on Things below us, should be little better than Logs of Wood floating on impelling Waters, and hurried down the Stream of Eternity

nity by Causes which have neither Sense nor Reason in them. Some may please themselves with Talk at this rate: Supposing God to be nothing, Man little different from the Brutes, and Brutes little better than so many senseless Machines, that is, so many Tools made up of Matter, put together by chance, and guided by necessary Impulses, they know not how. And then, for so might even a generous *Epicurean* say, before I would have such a Cheat put upon me by Universal Nature, before I would be affronted with the seeming Concessions of Choice and Reason, and Dominion over my self, without the real Possession,

*Were I to chuse what Flesh I would wear,  
I had rather be a Monkey or a Bear,  
Or any Thing but that proud Animal  
Which boasts it self in being Rational.*

*Rochester's  
Satyr  
against  
Man.*

It would not vex one half so much to be an inanimate Lump, kick'd up and down the Streets by a Being better than ones self, as to lye at the Mercy of a pitiful and ignoble Crowd, not only to be trampled upon and toss'd here and there, but be forced to Speak, Debate, Think, and Believe, as every

Upstart in Nature, every Turn of blind and tumultuous Matter shall make its Insults upon us. The Soul of *Epicurus* abhorred so mean a Thought, and would admit of any Absurdity, rather than not introduce a self-commanding Principle, which might break the Chain of Fate, and maintain the Freedom and Dignity of an Intelligent Being, against the Necessitation of outward Causes. Be it so then, most excellent *Epicurus*; we will not take the Advantage of this Concession to juggle thee and thy Atoms against each other, by shewing how impossible it is that a voluntary rational Agent should be produced by the Motions of irrational unintelligent Matter, or that the Pretence of a declining Atom will not † defend us from the Danger of fatal Necessity. Let us follow the Supposition as far as it will lead us. 'Tis necessary, it seems, that there should be a Principle of Free-Will, which checks and over-rules the otherwise fatal Progression of outward Causes. Is it so only here upon the Earth, or also in those || innumerable Worlds and Habitations which we will grant are not believed in vain. If so,

as

† Cicero de  
fato.

|| *Diog. La-*  
*ert. in Vita*  
*Epicuri, &*  
*Lucret. l. 2.*  
*& alibi.*

as certainly there is as much Reason for the one as the other, then here is a Ground for believing innumerable intelligent Beings, which all over the Universe are the Lords paramount, and endowed with a Divine Prerogative of controuling the blind Efforts, and guiding the irregular Tendency of irrational Agents. What these Intelligences should be, and why they may not have Power and Wisdom as far different from us as the glorious Apartments of Heaven differ from this Earth of ours; or why they may not concern themselves about us, by their Perfections supplying what is defective in us, and helping entirely to redeem us from the Dominion of Necessity; or, why this Principle may not carry us to an universal Intelligence, whose supream Will and Power may break and over-rule the universal Power of Fate, is not so easily answered. Which may induce us to believe, that what \* *Epicurus* spoke and writ of Sanctity and Piety to the Gods, and of an excellling and transcendent Nature, was not merely Verbal, but an agreeable Consequence of his other Opinions: and that the Saying of † *Cotta* might

\* *Diag. Laert. in vita. Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.*  
 † *Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.*

## Reason and Religion, &amp;c.

be true enough, That he never saw any one more afraid than he was of what he said there was no Reason to fear, that is, Death and the Gods. But to leave *Epicurus*, who might now and then have his melancholick Fits, and talk a little too highly and incoherently of God and Man.

3. Let us advance one Step nearer unto his Disciples ; who make as bold with his Hypothesis, to take in or leave out according as the Fit works with them , as || he did with his Master *Democritus*.

|| Cic. de fin.  
I. 1.

You shall not be tied to any One's Opinion of God, nor be bound to maintain Free Will in Man, nor to answer a great many troublesome Questions, How senseless disorderly Matter could possibly jump into Thought and Order. Apply your Mind to the Motions and supposed Results of Matter, and follow the Guidance of it, through its visible Train and Consequences, how fatal soever the Event may prove. Mind only what you say, and compare it with what you see, and with Faithfulness expect the Issue.

I. Some-



I. Something, which you cannot believe is any other than Matter in Motion, hath produced such intelligent thinking Beings as we call Men. Let us come from whence you will, here we are; governing, using, and recreating ourselves with inferiour Creatures; debating the Nature of Truth and Falshood, Good and Evil, and managing our Affairs with much Wisdom and Precaution.

II. We lift up our Eyes to Heaven, and there we observe the Sun and the Stars, Bodies of a wonderful Magnitude, moving in an indeterminable Space, in an invariable Order, and at a vast Distance from us. Hath our Atoms provided so rarely for us, as to frame such a glorious Canopy || merely for our Benefit, for such mortal Machines, such Tools of Necessity to look upon? Is all Nonsense, and nothing but vain glistering beyond this Earth of ours? Or, if we might have a compleat View of the Glories represented to us in so narrow a compass, \* might we not expect to meet with our Match, and find Beings which have Sense, and Thought, and Reason as well as we?

|| *Lucret. l. 5.  
Cic. de Nat.  
Deor. l. 1.*

\* *Fata vero  
necesse est  
esse alios  
alibi con-  
gressus ma-  
teri ai qua-  
lis hic est.  
Lucr. l. 2.*



III. And if it be a Piece of Folly and Presumption in Man to think himself the only Wise, it is not much less, to think himself the Wisest Being in the Universe. The Barbarous *Americans*, before their Commerce and Acquaintance with the *European* World, might with much greater Reason suppose themselves the most Polite and Knowing, the most Skilful in all Arts and Sciences of any People upon Earth, because they had Knowledge and Skill bearing some Proportion to an Earthly State ; but the Wisest of us all are much short of what may be expected and supposed in Heaven. Could you have so mean an Opinion of Nature as to stint the Powers thereof to the Production of Beings no better than ourselves ; Could you be so weak as to fancy the Intelligences in all, even infinitely distant Apartments, are of the same Kind and Capacities, equally unhappy, equally perplexed about the Origin, and Ministration, and End of Things, and as ignorant of Us as we are of Them ; That Nature should not make one Being that could give a more certain Account of its Operations than we can, and enquire why any one  
should

should believe otherwise, it may be answered, from the different Contextures and Varieties of Matter. If, indeed, all the Habitations in the Universe were of the same kind, it makes the Argument more probable, That all the Inhabitants might be of the same kind too. But if there be great Variety in the Coalition and Segregations of Matter; if the more fine, active, and tenuious, be separated from the more gross, heavy, and unactive; if some Parts of the Universe have sensibly and certainly more Heat and Vigour than others; Why should we not believe as much Variety in the ruling Inhabitants that are placed therein? It will not be needful at this time to give a Scheme of the World, or to reflect on the Foolishness of *Epicurus*, who thought the Sun not above two Foot broad, or about the Bigness of a pretty large Wheel, which needs only being laugh'd at. The innumerable Worlds supposed by him will serve our Turn as well. We have here Heat and Cold, Light and Darknesh, and a Constitution tolerably suited for bearing these Changes: But when we see one Star differing from another Star in Glory,

*Cic. de fin.*  
li. 1. *Lucr.*  
l. 5. *Plut.*  
*Plac.* l. 2.  
c. 210.

## Reason and Religion, &amp;c.

Glory, we must suppose a more glorious and beatifying Concourse ( of Atoms if you please ) in some Parts than in others; where, a Light too splendid for mortal Eye to approach, and a Heat too vigorous for Flesh and Blood to endure, adorns and refines both the Place and the Products of it. The Blackness and Tawniness caused by too near Approaches to the Sun, is little other than the Scum of a filthy and over-heated Nature. But those Beings whose Inheritance is in superabounding Light, must have Natures pure and defecate, clarified from the Dregs and Corruptions of an Earthly State, not so properly \* *cor-*

Cic. de Nat. Deor. l. 1.  
Origen. cont. Celsum,  
lib. 4.

Tenuis enim Natura  
Deum longèque remotà  
sensibus ab nostris. Lu-  
cret. lib. 5.

*pus*, as *quasi corpus*, a Body, ( if † we must call it a Body ) || tenuous and spiritual, differing in proportion, as much from us, as Heaven from Earth. Thus you are led at

least unto the Heathen Deities, unto an innumerable Company of Heavenly Intelligences, or ( if we may begin to speak in the Language of Christianity ) to the Acknowledgment of Angels and Archangels.

IV. Nor is it reasonable for us to stop here, but on the same Foundation we may raise our Belief of a Supreme Intelligence; in whom the several Powers and Perfections in Nature do most eminently concenter. Those Principles from whence we infer the Existence of Beings in all Ranks of Perfection higher and more excellent than our selves, may, without much begging of the Question, be supposed to prove the Existence of one Most High. And if our Materialists shall require for this, some evident Symptoms and Indications in Nature; and shall profess their Belief of Superiour Intelligences, from the Appearance of more blessed and glorious Habitations, but not of a Supreme Intelligence, because the Existence of a most Blessed Place, which may be the Throne, Palace, or Residence of the Supreme Being is not so visible unto them; it may be answered,

1. That they beg the Question as much as we. They suppose there is no Supreme Intelligence, we suppose there is; and so far we are equal, nay considering the Ranks of Beings, have the Advantage in Their own Hypothesis.

2. That

2. That the Unity of the God-head, tho' a certain Truth, is not absolutely necessary to the Enforcement of Religion; for the most ignorant Heathen, whose Faith and Reason could not carry them beyond a Multitude of Gods, were nevertheless very Devout and Religious in their Way: So that whether there be one God or more, you cannot but be under a Divine Influence to a Religious Life.

3. That our Belief of a Supream Being need not depend on the supereminency of any particular Place. The Glory of the Highest may manifest itself all over the Universe, in measures suitable to the Dignity of Place and Persons: And tho' one Place may not in itself be really more glorious than all the rest, yet it may be rendred relatively so, by the Glory of his Presence.

4. They who deny the supereminency of any particular Place, speak contrary to the common Appearances of Matter. Of all Things within the compass of our View and Vortex, the Sun makes the most astonishing and brightest Show: And if any Religious Person will say, that the Supream Being

ing hath set his Tabernacle in the Sun, the modern *Epicureans*, even on their own Principles, can only oppose a pretty confident Assertion by a more confident Denial. And if any shall bring the fix'd Stars in as Competitors in Splendour, each as the Center of a particular Vortex, and say, any of them may put in for the Center of the Universe as well as the Sun, they prove nothing for themselves; for as of the Planetary, so likewise of the Fix'd, one Star may differ from another Star in Glory: And if the Sun be not the most Glorious, we only introduce some other in the room; for there is no imaginable Reason to believe them exactly all alike. Or if any shall think, that tho' the Sun makes so fine a show, the inward Glory thereof is not so considerable: Which they would gather from the gross and fiery Eruptions from the Body of the Sun, discover'd by our late famous Glasses, that may arise from the Deceivableness of the Sight; as the unsteadiness or half-shutting of the Eye, or the interposing of any small Bodies, makes us think we see Streams of Fire from a distant Light, when there are none. Or

Second-



Secondly, the Collection of such strong and powerful Rays as proceed from the Body of the Sun, may so affect the Nerves with an extraordinary Vigour, that we cannot rightly judge of it, but think we see nothing but Fire. Or, a Refraction from the Atmosphere of the Sun, replenished with vivid and peircing Rays, may cause such a Confusion in our Judgment, tho' within there may be a blessed Habitation of serene and pure Light.

5. Let the Sun and Fix'd Stars be what their Cause hath made them. 'Tis more than sufficient for us, That some Place in the Universe may be more eminently glorious than all the rest, tho' we cannot point out what or where it is. 'Tis not probable, that we can see the Thousandth part of the Stars; which may be concealed from us not only by their Smallness, but their Distance. The Universe is another kind of a Thing than we are capable of conceiving; and its invisible Glories may as far exceed every Thing visible, as the Sun and Fix'd Stars do exceed the grosser Bodies which move about them. And as every Sphere or Vortex retains its most lively and illuminating



minating Particles at the Center, while the more scummy, feculent, and heavy, boil off to the Circumference ; so the whole Universe may be consider'd as one vast Vortex, having in or near its Center a Coacervation of all blessed Ingredients, for making a Light most pure, a Heat most benign, and a Life most happy.

In a careful Observation of the Heavens, we may perceive the Glimmerings and Coruscation of an extraordinary Glory, which hitherto none hath been able to give any tolerable Account of. But what hath been said, agrees with the Opinion of our Divines concerning the *Cælum Empyræum*, a Seat and Residence of Divine Glory, the most resplendent.

And have not we now humour'd our Materialists, in proving from their own Principles, the Existence of a Superiour or Supream Intelligence.

V. We may advance, now, one Step farther, and break the very Heart of the *Epicurean* Hypothesis. Their last Refuge for Irreligion is, to suppose that no Superiour Being meddles or concerns himself in Humane Affairs. And if the Divine Beings (think they) do

do not concern themselves at all about us, why should we concern our selves at all about them.

But before you make such an irregular Inference, you can never be too careful to secure the Premises. For,

¶ *Nec bene promeritis  
capitur nec tangitur ira,  
Lucret. l. 1. Natura vi-  
detur Libera continus  
dominis privata super-  
bis ipsa sua per se sponte  
omnia Diis agere expert.*  
Lucret. l. 2.

¶ if you propagate and entertain so mean an Opinion of God, and prove mistaken, you may forfeit his Love, and find it too hard a task to oppose his Displeasure, when too late to atone it.

In the Name of God then, let us seriously debate this Point, and enquire into the Reasons either of Denying or Asserting a Divine Providence : which will terminate in these three Considerations ; of the Power, of the Authority, of the Will of God. If there be no Heavenly Being which both may, can, and will intrest himself in Earthly Matters, then our Discourses of Providence are vain and superstitious : But if something Divine hath a Power, Right, and Mind to Oversee and Govern us, our Obligations unto Providence are in Force still.

I. And what imaginable Reasons can we have to suppose, that the Di-  
vine

vine Power and Cognizance extend not to us. Can the wing'd Inhabitants of this lower Orb mount out of our Sight, and approach the very Confines of invisible Regions, and not exalt our Faith to the Acknowledgment of an Entercourse between Earth and Heaven? Can short-sighted Mortals, with some small Assistance unto their Visive Faculty, perceive the Inequalities of Hills and Valleys, Earth and Water in the Body of the Moon, the Spots in the Sun, and in the Body of *Jupiter*, the different Phases of *Mercury* and *Venus*, and even of *Saturn* so distant from us, with the small Satellities unto the greater Planets; and shall not an Heavenly Eye, with transcending Clearness and Accuracy, penetrate into the *Phænomena* of our Imperfect State? Can the Skill of a Physiognomist give notable Conjectures of the inward Temper by the outward Lineaments and Features; Can the Astronomer tell you the Conjunctions and Oppositions, the Motions, Magnitude, and Distance of the Heavenly Bodies; Can an Experienc'd Physician see through the Colour, Qualities, and Agitations of the Body, into its latent

latent Distempers; and the Sagacity of a *Chinese*, measure out the Life of Man by the Beating of his Pulse? And shall we not allow the Divine Wisdom a more profound and perfect Intuition into the secret Windings and Intricacies, the various Combination, Tendency, Influence, and Events of Sublunary Transactions? We cannot prescribe the Bounds even of Earthly Improvements: Every Age crowns the Diligence and Meditations of Men with new Encreases of Knowledge: And since we cannot determine the utmost Exaltation of Humane Nature, or what Sacred Commerce with the Spiritual World we may attain unto; Why should we rashly limit the Faculties of better Things, or fancy that any Darkness or Distance, which are but relative and comparative, should cover us from the View of a Superintending Deity. We may positively assure ourselves, that the lowest in the Angelical Rank is furnish'd with Abilities to pry into our Affairs, and to govern and manage, as he himself pleases, the Persons of all Mankind.

2. Our next Enquiry is, concerning the Authority and Rightful Foundation  
of

of Divine Government. The Holy and Blessed Beings above will not meddle with that which they have nothing to do with : But if we will take Mr. *Hobbes* for our Spiritual Guide, we shall soon remove all Scrupulosity in this Case. Power confers Right ; and he justly possesses a Domination over others who is most strong. 'Tis true, if a Power be irresistible, we have no Reason to quarrel with it, whether we have a Right or no : And the Accumulation of Abilities necessary to command, seems an Indication in Nature where Obedience should be paid. This Mr. *Hobbes* makes the Ground \* even of Divine Government ; and the † Followers of Mr. *Calvin* speak conformably to it : But because it may look something strange to fix no better Ground for obeying God, than for obeying a Tyrant or a Thief that proves too hard for us, you shall not be urged with any ones Authority in this Point neither. Others fix the Basis of God's Government in the Act of Creation, and limit the Exercise of his Power to the Measure of his Benefits. Of which Number are the first Refiners || of *Platonism*, and the ||

\* *Leviathan*, c. 31.  
or *alibi*.

† *Gomarus*,  
*Maccovius*,  
*Amynvaldus*,  
*Camero*, &c.

|| *Hierocles*  
*de Provid.*  
*Armi- & Fate.*

• *Arminii Thes. privat. de Prædest. 27. Remonstrantes Explic. cap. 9. ad Roman. &c. especially Curcellæus de dominio dei in Creaturas Innocentes.*

• *Armenians.* And because it may be supposed you will catch at this Opinion, we will try the Force of it, and see how well it will serve for your purpose. And,

If Benificence be the Basis of Government, are you sure that God hath no Right to interpose in our Affairs? Is it likely (upon your own Principles, which need not always be particularly mention'd) that the Divine Nature is not more ancient than the Humane? That its antecedent Excellencies should have no Hand in our Formation? Or may not the Superiour Beings, if they are disposed to meddle in our Affairs, by their watching over us for Good, merit our Obedience and Subjection? Are not several Inferiour Creatures fed by our Kindness, and preserved by our Providence, tho' we did not create and form them? And do not the Blessings descending from the Administrations of Earthly Government render a Legislative rightful and reasonable, tho' they have no Creative Power? The aforesaid Authors have pursued a good Notion a little too far; the † one of them saying, that if Mat-

† *Hierocles, ut supra.*

ter



ter be coeternal with God, his endeavouring to make a Change therein, by drawing it into Form and Order, must be injurious: the other, That || could we suppose ourselves not to have received the Benefit of Creation from God, but come into the World without any Obligation to his Power and Goodness in forming us, we might admire the transcendent Excellencies of his Nature, but could not justly be subjected unto his Government and Disposal. The Weakness of which Assertions will appear by the two following Arguments. First, That it is very fit, in the Order of Nature, that the Inferiour should be subservient unto the Superiour: For what other Reason can You assign for the Dominion of Man over inferiour Creatures: They are coeval with us; and 'tis certain, we could have no hand in the Formation of them. But as that natural Dependance and Relation between Superiour and Inferiour justifies (not our Tyranny and Cruelty, there can never be any Reason in Nature for that, but) our taming and subduing them to necessary Uses, our bridling and governing them as is expedient; much

|| See Curcellans.



much stronger is the Argument when applied to the Difference between God and Man. Secondly, All Beings have a general Right and Charter to do good, and to be the Ministers of Eternal Rectitude, in promoting Order, and preventing Disorder in the Universe. Is it lawful for us to cultivate the Earth, and draw out of the Heart and Bowels of it, Fruits and Minerals, for Ornament, Nourishment, and Preservation; to extirpate noxious Weeds, and promote the Encrease of useful Plants, beautiful Flowers and Objects of Delight: May we without the Imputation of injurious Medling, cherish mild, quiet, and profitable Tempers, and deliver the weak and inoffensive from the wild and untameable Birds and Beasts and Men of Prey which are too strong for them? May we unblameably rescue the Good from the Jaws of the Wicked, and celebrate the Atchievements of those ancient or modern Worthies who have made it

protect

\* *Causin* of  
*Constan-*  
*sine.*

their Business to \* redeem Mankind from Oppression and to quell Monsters? May Earthly Magistrates draw Malefactors before the Judgment-Seat, and consign them to Punishment,

test the Innocent, and reward the Well-deserving according to their Discretion? And can Men have the Impudence to question God's Right to do Good, to bring Order out of Disorder, to take care of and reward the Meek and Holy, to restrain and punish the Subdolous or violent Workers of Iniquity? What is this, but to exalt Mankind to the Dignity of Gods, and to depress the Divine Prerogative below the Privileges of Men.

3. And if God both can and may, the Consequence is very natural, that he will and does interpose in the Management of Humane Affairs. Right and Power, in the Hands of a good Being, will not lye dormant; but exert their Force to the beneficial Employments for which they are adapted.

*Epicurus* indeed \* introduces the Gods so much taken up with their own Felicity, That they will not trouble themselves (for, in his Opinion, there must be a great Trouble) in minding any Thing else. And † his Wise

Men were to have their Lives form'd according to this Pattern of their Gods; enjoying their Ease and Pri-

\* *Lucretius,*  
*Plutarch,*  
 &c.

† *Plutarch. adversus*  
*Colotem, & de Repug-*  
*nantiis Stoicorum, &*  
*Arrian, Epictetus l. 1.*  
*c. 23. & alibi.*

vacy, and having nothing at all to do in Civil Administrations; in pursuance of his Principles, no doubt, That Chance might bear an Universal Sway, without the interposing of any Wise Mind to order it, either in Heaven or Earth. Not to reflect on *Epicurus*, by shewing the Need his Deities had to look to themselves, and the quiet Governing of the World; Must not doing Good be highly agreeable and pleasing unto a Good God? Must not the Delight and Complacency in beholding the due Procedure and Harmony of Things, preponderate the Trouble (if there should be some) in effecting it? Does a Vertuous Prince confine himself to the Pleasures of his Palace, or regret at his Hours of Watchfulness, Care, and Pains-taking, which secures the Prosperity of his People? Does not even Curiosity sweeten our tedious Inquisitions into Truth and Falshood, Right and Wrong, and Sympathy with the Vertuous in Distress, constrain us to take their part? And can we imagine the Deity should indulge an everlasting Slothfulness, when there is so much Good to be done, so much Evil to be redressed,

redressed, so many deserving Objects of his Compassion and Care, which call for his Assistance? Either we must condemn as Foolish the Vigilance of good Governours, laugh at the compassionate Essays of the Pious, and confound our Notions of Generosity, Benignity, and Things praise-worthy; or we can never persuade our selves, That God is an idle Spectator, and bears the Sword of Power and Authority in vain.

The last Pretext, of Trouble in the Conduct of Providence, hardly deserves an Answer. Can a single Man of Diligence and Sagacity, with comfort supervise so many Affairs, and an Earthly Potentate boast with how little Trouble the World was govern'd, and cannot God, whose Knowledge and Power inconceivably surpasses ours, who hath Millions of Heavenly Agents and Nuncio's to attend his Pleasure, and execute his Commands, dispatch the Affairs of his Government without any Confusion or Perplexity? Or, if you fear that seeing and being conversant among the Evils and Miseries of Mankind should really grieve and afflict a Mind of so great Benigni-

ty, allowing the Divine Nature the commendable Wisdom of a *Stoick*, that Difficulty you will easily surmount and cure.

4. What remains then, but that the Reasons of Irreligion falling, the Hypothesis invented for its Support should fall too. Mens naughty Opinions proceed not from an hard'ned Malignity against God, but either from Doubtfulness, or Consciousness of their own Demerits; and it is no wonder, if they strive by any Artifice to exclude that Providence from whence they expect no Good: Like the Iniquity of Men to their Brethren; first to offend and injure them, then to weaken their Authority and Credit; and if they do not, or cannot destroy them, yet to wish them dead. But since the Existence of God and his Providence maintains its Credit, and lives in the Belief of the Wise and Holy; since all you can say to the Prejudice of Religion profits you nothing, but even your own Principles must either endear or enslave you to it; since, to repeat it once more, the *Epicurean* Hypothesis, whatever it pretends at the first Interview, will unavoidably keep  
you

you to Religion, you had as good leave it, and be Religious upon the most excellent Principles.

And is it not much more becoming the Dignity of Man to pay his Obedience to an eternal King, whose Wisdom and Power is infinite, than to harbour in his Mind low Thoughts of the Deity which he must serve, and be govern'd by Chance only at the Second-Hand? Does it not make Religion, and the Offices thereof, look more venerable, and the Thoughts of the Divine Majesty more awful in the Soul, when the Bent of our Devotion terminates in the prime Cause, and contemplates Perfections not to be transcended? There the Soul, with Comfort and Credit, can acquiesce, and fix its Adorations when it can go no further.

All that hath been spoken, was intended not to improve, but gradually to wean you from the *Epicurean* Hypothesis. Its Heart and Spirit may be, because the Design of it is, well-nigh broken: And tho' it may not be convenient to rip open its Bowels, and expose its Loathsomeness, for fear of Defilement, yet one Consideration



more may be suggested ; namely, What the Heavenly Intelligences, according to this Atomical and Fortuitous Origination of Things, must think of themselves. 'Tis hard for Brutes to be made mere Machines, and Plants the Composition of Chance. Man looks a little higher, and will stoutly argue and dispute against it. And if the Heavenly Intelligences can be conscious of so mean an Original, they must needs be ashamed to own it.

To this shall be only added, That tho' it be impossible this absurd Hypothesis should be true, yet even from it so clear an Account may be deduced both of Divine Providence and Dispensations, of Angelical Beings and their Ministrations, of the Fall of the Devil, of his Deceiving Man, and of the Extent of his Power and Principality, that those Persons cannot but be • condemn'd out of their own Mouth, who dare to be Irreligious on this Foundation.

• Luke 19.  
22.

II. Let us proceed to the second Retirement of Infidelity ; That the World has always been as it is ; from Eternity subsisting in the same Frame and Order which we have at present.  
And



And what principally offers it self to our Consideration on this Subject, shall be introduced with

1. An Explication of the Hypothesis it self: For if we take it in the gross, nothing is more evidently true, than it is evidently false.

How can we say the World has been from Eternity as it is at present; when every Age, every Year, nay every Day, presents to our View such wonderful Mutations. What Revolutions in Humane Affairs, what Changes in Government, Religion, Laws, and Manners, what Improvements in Liberal and Mechanical Arts and Sciences, do the Histories of all Nations exhibit to us? Or if you can see no Argument in this, against the fixed Consistence of this Earthly Frame, take notice of the Conflicts and Jarrs among the Elements themselves, and their interchangeable replevying from each other; the Fire making its hostile Eruptions upon the Earth, as often as it can gather sufficient Forces, and either finds or makes a Vent; the Air cherishing noxious and pestilential Vapours, which destroy all before them, blast the Fruits of the Earth,

|| *Aristot.*  
*Meteor.* l. 1.  
c. 14.

and turns the Breath of Life into the Minister of Death. The Earth and the Water have their || Quarrels about Dominion, and enlarge their Bounds by mutual Depredations. Sometimes the Earth is too hard for the Waters, lifts up its Head above, and places a Garrison in the midst of the swelling

\* *Diodor. Sic.* l. 5. c. 13.  
*Philo* *de* *ae* *dy* *gi* *as* *na* *o* *mu*. *Plin. Nat. Hist.*  
l. 2. c. 87.

† *Pliny. Philo* *ibid.* &  
*Aristot. apud Plin. lib.* 4.  
cap. 12.

|| *Nat. Hist.* lib. 2. cap.  
85, 87, 89.

Floods. \* *Rhodes* and † *Delos*, with many lesser Monuments mention'd by || *Pliny*, shew that the Earth can be sometimes brisk, and throwing off her natural dullness, recover some Ground

from her neighbouring Foe. And again, the Waters have been too many for the Earth, scorning to have their Forces disjoyn'd by the weak Fences of Nature, making their Way

\* *Verstegan* l. 1. c. 4.  
*Camden*, &c.

† *Plin.* l. 2. c. 88. *Strabo* l. 1. *Diod. Sic.* l. 4.  
c. 14.

|| *Aristot. de Mun.* c. 4.  
*Philo, Strabo, Pliny*, &c.

|| *In Trinac, Critia*, &c. See also the later Histories of *Peru* and *Mexico*. *Lipsius Physiol. Scie.* p. 247.

(if not \* between *England* and *France*, yet) between † *Italy* and *Sicily*, *Cyprus* and *Syria*, &c. taking no less than three || famous Cities in *Peloponnesus*, and over-running, in a Night and a Day, the great Island *Atlantis*, if you will believe || *Plato*. Nor have their swallowing some

some certain Cities or Countries bounded their Ambition, which in the Times of *Noah*, *Ogyges*, and *Deucalion*, almost obtain'd by prodigious Inundations, and threatned to establish an Universal Empire. 'Tis true, we have now a tolerably quiet Temperament of Things; but these wonderful Effects of contending Elements minister sufficient ground of suspecting, that it hath not been always upon the Earth as it is at present; which is supposed and confessed \* by the principal Patrons of this Hypothesis: of which we shall make our Advantage afterwards. But Master *Aristotle* perchance will obviate our Design by one of his Distinctions, telling us, that these formidable Changes happen only in the † Elementary or Sublunary World, but ‖ the Celestial Bodies, made up of his Fifth or Finest Element, are liable to no Changes or Corruptions, but conserve an immutable and even Tenour through all the Successions of Eternity. Had he himself been made up of this fine incorrupti-

D 5

ble.

\* *Ocellus Lucanus de Universo* cap. 3. *Aristot. de Mundo* passim.

† *Aristot. de celo* lib. 3. cap. 6. *de mundo*, & *de Generat. & Corrupt.* passim. Item, *Ocellus Lucan* c. 2.

‖ *Aristot. de celo* lib. 1. cap. 10. lib. 2. 3. passim. *Plut. de Pla.* lib. 1. cap. 3.

ble Element, his own Experience and Modesty might have convinced him by this time of his great Mistake. The Moon and other Planetary Bodies are found to be near of the same Nature and Constitution with the Earth.

\* *Cartes. princip. Philosophie*, Part. 3. Sect. 104. *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. 2. c. 26.

\* Many Fix'd Stars innume- rated by the Ancients are now unknown; and many appear a-new which former Ages give no Account of;

and that notable Star in *Cassiopeia*, bigger and brighter than the rest of the Fix'd Stars, first observed *November 1572*, and disappearing *March 1574*, had a very fatal Influence upon, and portended the Overthrow of this Hypothesis. Nay, those Blazing Stars, which in all Ages shake their ominous Rods over admiring Mortals, forewarn us by a right Calculation of their Altitude, not to depend on it. The Philosopher indeed, agreeably to his Principles, † could not allow the Blazing Stars a place so high as the Orb of the Moon; the Senselessness of which Fancy, contrary to many other Reasons, is evidently demonstrated from the Insensibility of their Parallax. How much they are higher than the Moon, we cannot

† *Aristot. de Met.* l. 1. c. 67. *Plut. de Plac. Phil.* 3. c. 1, 2.

cannot certainly tell; but, in all Probability, they must needs be advanced above the Sphere of *Saturn*. Hence follows, that when any one says, the World has been from Eternity as it is at present their Words must be a little qualified, and mean no more, than that the Substance or general Compages of the World may have been Eternal; though the several Parts of it, both in Heaven and Earth, or all alternately, have undergone very considerable Changes and Alterations.

2. Let us next enquire into the Reasons which might tempt Men to this Opinion of the World's Eternity: And they seem to be two. First, because they could perceive no Changes, no Symptoms of the Generation or Corruption of the World: And Secondly, because they could give no reasonable Account of the World's Origin and Production.

† The first we find in *Ocellus Lucanus*, and *Aristotle*; and all their winding and circular Disputes for the Impossibility of its Generation from the Impossibility of its Corruption, & *vice versa*, ter-

† Τὸ δὲ γὰρ ὅλον καὶ τὸ πᾶν  
εἶδεν ἡμῖν ἐξ αὐτῆς παρὰ  
ταὶ τελευτῆς τοῦ κόσμου  
οὕτως γὰρ γινώσκοντες αὐτὴν  
εἶδμεν, &c. *Ocell. cap.*  
† *Aristot. de celo*, l.  
c. 10.

minate

|| 2 Pet. 3. 4.  
 Ir. Philo  
 ἐπεὶ ἀφ' ἀρχῆς  
 οὐκ ἦν χρόνος.

minate in this: Like the Argument against the Dissolution of the World, mention'd by the Scoffers in || *St. Peter*. For since the Fathers fell asleep, all Things continue as they were from the Beginning of the Creation. And to this we may return the same Answer, That they who can see no Indications of a changeable Nature, must needs be willingly ignorant; and for clearing their Eye-sight, may be referr'd unto the preceding Paragraph. And if seeing or not seeing can be an Argument on either side, it can be only against them. For we do see, and are positively assured, of very great Changes in the World; and if it had a Beginning newly form'd, Mankind might have sensible Convictions of it: But if the World be Eternal, it requires a very large Faith to look back into its Certainty, and no Mortal could ever have a sensible or ocular Demonstration of it.

The Second Reason we take from the conceited Humour of *Aristotle*; \* who being too much given to condemn and deride others, † and servilely following his own Reason to the assigning a Cause for the smallest Matters,

\* *Ælian.*  
*var. Hist.*  
 l. 3. c. 19.  
 † *Diog. La-*  
*ert. in vitâ,*  
*of Aristot.*  
*Phys. l. 1. c. 1.*



ters, \* laugh'd at all Accounts of the World's Original, and judg'd the Defenders of it little better

\* *Cicer. in Luculla. Philo dei aduocatus. Aristot. de Caelo. Physic. Audit. de Generat. & Corrup. passim.*

than mad. This hasty Shooting of his Bolt, proceeded from the Excess of his Pride, or the Defectiveness of his own Reason. He could have no satisfying Notion, when, or by what means, or in what manner the World was made. And how should any thing be done without *Aristotle's* knowing it. We will not enquire into his profound Skill in the whole Circle of Physics, his rare Definitions of Substance, Form, Time, Motion, &c. his accurate Discovery of Meteors (except Comets, which you heard something of lately) and the familiar Acquaintance he had with the substantial Forms and occult Qualities of Nature. We will only ask his Disciples, What they can think of the Generation of Man? Can you tell how such Rational Beings as we are, attain our Maturity and Perfection? What are the constituent Principles of our Nature? How the Body is form'd and organized? At what time the Soul is united to it? or how an Immaterial can operate on  
a Ma-



a Material Being, and receive Impressions from it? Or (for perchance you may be disposed to smile at the former Questions) How meer Matter, and the rude Elements of Life, can expand themselves to the Production and Exercise of those Noble Functions, of Sensation, Cogitation, Memory, &c. Consider a while of it, and by that time you can return a satisfying Answer to these Questions, we may give you as satisfying an Account of the Formation of the World. But if this little World be a Province too difficult for your Undertaking, What Humility do our Contemplations of the Universe require? And how absurd must it be to assert the Eternity of the World upon those Principles, which either prove that there are no Men in the World, or that they are all Eternal. For instance, If it be impossible there should be any Communion between a Material and an Immaterial Being, or that mere Matter should think Reason, and remember, &c. as the Difficulties are inexplicable on each side, then there are no Men in the World; and how big soever we may look, we are no better than those Apparitions and

and Shades of the Night, which poor ignorant People are so commonly frightened with. Or, if you are not pleased with that, since we could have our Beginning neither from Matter nor Spirit, for chuse which you will 'tis an easie matter to puzzle you, then we must have been and shall be for ever just as we are at present, and all the Histories and Evidences of Life and Death are to be rejected as fabulous Fears, Fancies, and Traditions. This is exactly your way of dealing with us. You ask us two or three puzzling Questions about the Origin and Formation of the World; and because we do not explain it entirely to your Satisfaction, therefore it must be Eternal.

3. Our third Reflection shall fall on the Novelty of this Opinion, and its arrogant breaking in upon the Prescriptions of Antiquity.

When Time had worn off the Reverence, with the uniform Attestations of Tradition, the World's Original began to be debated by the weak Reason of Man. And the wrangling Philosophers raising up Difficulties which they could not lay again, like so many Evil Spirits let loose upon the Earth,  
they

they tempted Men from the Acknowledgment of their Primitive Cause; and deceived them with the Insinuations of becoming wise, nay, wiser than their Forefathers. *Aristotle*, all over his Physical Discourses, musters up the Opinion of preceding Philosophers; gives no Intimations of any that believed as he did; but disputes against *Melissus*, *Parmenides*, *Heraclitus*, *Empedocles*, *Leucippus*, *Democritus*, *Anaxagoras*, *Timæus*, *Plato*, &c. pleasing himself, no doubt, in the Singularity of his Notion, and sufficiently confuting the World's *Genesis*, by finding some Flaw in the Solutions of it, or shewing their Repugnancy to each other. A little Tract of *Ocellus*, indeed, deprives *Aristotle* of the Glory which the † first Inventer of so fine an Hypothesis might expect: some Copies of which Tract ‖ came, probably, to his hands; tho' as it happen'd, all did not. If this, *Ocellus* be the same whom *Diogenes Laertius* \* mentions, ( as we will not suborn the appearing Advantages both in *Ocellus* and *Diogenes* to witness against it ) the Opinion of the World's Eternity bears something a more ancient Date than the Time of *Aristotle*. But, alas,

† Philo *de*  
*ἀποδείξεις*  
*νέου μ.*

‖ Vide *Nagarela An-*  
*not. in Ocel-*  
*lum.*

\* In *vita*  
*Archylæ.*

alas, What is this to the whole Stream of unsuspected Antiquity? Consult the Archaeologies of all Ages; and if you find the most ancient Monuments of Reason and Intelligence taking the Tradition of the World's Original for granted, where can you expect to find more competent Judges? All those in *Caldæa, Assyria, Persia, Phœnicia, Egypt, Greece, Italy, Palestine, &c.* who lived nearest the Beginning which *Moses* speaks of, do likewise speak of it as a Matter never controverted: But when those Reverend Worthies were gone off the Stage, from whose Repute for Learning and laborious Inquiries, and Capacity for knowing most of the Ages most doubted of, Mankind might receive the best Information; when Tradition, which in this Case is a better Rule than Reason, grew weaker and weaker by passing through so many Hands, then that became a Controversie which before was none, and some, who envied the Reputation, would not yield unto the Authority of former Ages. Matter of Fact is not to be known by Reason, but by Testimony: And since for much above 3000 Years after the Beginning which

we

we contend for, we have a Cloud of Witnesses, in distinct Ages and Countries, which appear for us, and not one against us: This shews, That the nearer to that Beginning, the clearer was the Certainty, the stronger the Belief of it: And this Weight of Universal Consent ought much to overballance any Arguments whatsoever, which some later Pretenders to Reason, in their private Contemplations and Retirements shall suggest.

4. Our next Essay shall be, to make the best of this Hypothesis: And tho' the Reasons for it be weak, and the Tradition against it strong, yet you must know, its chief Defenders were not such an Ungodly Generation as would now pervert and abuse it. You, therefore, whom the Supposal of this World's Eternity makes unmindful of God, look unto the Rock from whence it was hewn, and hear what the first of your Race profess concerning the Divine Nature.

*Ocellus Lucanus. in  
Stobæo. Ec-  
log. Phys.  
l. 1. c. 16.*

“ Life keeps our Earthly Tabernacles from falling in pieces, and the Cause of this is the Soul: And Harmony conserves the World, and the Cause of this is God.

“ The

*Oculus de  
Univerſo,  
cap. 2.*

“ The Sphere of the Moon is the  
“ Isthmus or Partition between a  
“ changeable Life and Immortality.  
“ The Regions above being the Pos-  
“ session of God and Divine Natures,  
“ and those below of [mutable] Na-  
“ ture and Contention.

*Idem, cap. 4*

“ God gives to Men Generative Fa-  
“ culties, Organs, and Appetites ; not  
“ for Pleasure, but the Preservation of  
“ their kind. *And a little after,* They  
“ who altogether abstain from the  
“ Procreation of Children, are injuri-  
“ ous to the most honorable Bonds of  
“ Union : but from irregular and re-  
“ proachful Mixtures proceed a Gene-  
“ ration of Wretches, vile and abomi-  
“ nable both to God and Man, to Fa-  
“ milies and Cities.

“ God and Nature do nothing in  
“ vain. *Aristotle de  
Celo, l. 1. c. 4.*

“ All Men have a Notion or Con-  
“ ception of God, and allot unto the  
“ Divine Nature the highest Place,  
“ whether they be *Greeks* or *Barbari-*  
“ *ans*, or whoever think of God : For *Idem, l. 1. c. 3.*  
“ it is manifest, an Everlasting Being  
“ ought to be fitted with an Everlast-  
“ ing Habitation.

*De celo*, l. 2.  
c. 12.

" We may very well think, that by  
" one first [Mover] these several  
" [heavenly Bodies, or their Motions]  
" do subsist: For you may observe in  
" all other kinds of Life or Principles,  
" the Supereminence is in a first over  
" all the rest.

*De Generat.*  
*& Corrup.*  
l. 2. c. 10.

" God gives Compleatness to the  
" whole, and makes every particular  
" Production perfect.

*De Mundo*  
*Passim.*

" We ought to think of God, as a  
" Being most powerful for Strength,  
" most perfect in Beauty, in Life im-  
" mortal, in Excellencies transcendent.

*Aut Aristoteles,*  
*aut Aristotelici.*

" And what the Master is in a Ship,  
" the Driver in a Chariot, the Leader  
" in a Dance, the Law in a City, the  
" General in an Army, that is God in  
" the World. Except, in as much as  
" they, in their respective Places, di-  
" rect with Wearisomness, Toil and  
" Care; but he without Pain, with-  
" out Labour, exempted from all Bo-  
" dily Weaknesses whatsoever. For  
" being fix'd on an immovable Throne,  
" he moves all Things, and turns them  
" about, according to his Pleasure.

It would be endless to transcribe  
Religious Expressions from the Fol-  
lowers of *Aristotle*. Let it suffice to  
tell



tell you, That the latter

\* *Platonists* embraced this Opinion of the World's Eternity; and made a great deal to do to reconcile † *Plato* first to *Aristotle*, then to himself. So that if you will make this Hypothesis fight against God, you must fight against the Pillars and main Upholders of it; whose devout Elevations of Soul expressed in their several Ages, a Reverence for the Deity, and would have abhorr'd, as a degenerated Brood, the Blasphemers of it.

\* See *Marcellus Ficinus*, in *Platonis Timæum*, c. 13. & *Johannes Grammaticus*.

† See *Hierocles de Providentia*, & *Aeneas Gazæus*.

5. All the Religious Principles, by natural Light form'd in the Mind, concerning God, are indifferently well consistent with the World's Eternity: Which you cannot but be satisfied in, considering,

1. Many Christian Philosophers, believing the Beginning spoken of by *Moses*, think it not impossible (if God had so pleased) for the World to have been made before, even from Eternity. They dare not limit the Power of God, as not in Efficacy, so not to Time: And if any one will say, an Eternal Cause may have an Eternal Effect, they will not be positive in denying

nying it. In which Number you shall not be referred to some ancient Here-ticks, or to our late foolish *Pre-Adamites*, but to the Debates among our || most eminent School-men and Metaphy-sicians.

|| Aquinas,  
Suarez, Va-  
squez, Greg.  
Valentia,  
Baronius,  
&c.

II. The later *Platonists* and *Aristotelians* argued for the World's Eternity, chiefly from the Consideration of God's Eternal Goodness: Which Argument of theirs is most clearly expressed by *Sallustius*, and in the fewest

\* Ἀναρχία διὰ τὴν τῆ  
Θεοῦ ἀγαθότητα ὅντ' ἔ  
κόσμου, αἰεὶ τε ἡ Θεοῦ,  
ἀγαθὸν εἶναι καὶ τὸ κόσμον  
ὑπαρχειν. Sallustius de  
Diis & Mondo, c. 7.  
† De Mundo sub nomine  
Aristotelis. Metaphys.  
Maj. cap. 2. Metaphys.  
sub nomine Theophrasti,  
cap. 1.

Words. 'Tis • necessary (says he) the World exist-  
ing through the Goodness  
of God, that as God is al-  
ways Good, the World should  
always Exist. They † re-  
cognize God as the Cause,  
the Fountain, the Parent of  
the Universe, and affirm it

the Effect, Off-spring, and Emanation from him. Only they suppose a Being Eternally Good must be Eternally Communicative: Which Reason, by the way, if it have any Force in it, makes not so much for the Eternal Generation of the World, as of the WORD and Son of God.

III. It does no way derogate from the spiritual Nature or Providence of God ; but supposes an Eternal Conservation and Direction of all Things under the Government of an Eternal Spirit. || *Aristotle*, the most suspected Person, acknowledges this. And if Immaterial and Incorporeal Being or Substance, be *Jargon*, *Tobu* and *Bobu*, 'tis none of our Framing or Invention. The Fear indeed of some Religious, and the Hopes of some Irreligious Men, may deserve our Notice : As if that which supposes God to act by a Necessity of Nature, must render instituted Religion absurd, and to no purpose, and vacate the Expectations of Reward or Dreads of Punishment. This formidable Difficulty will soon vanish, when it appears how preposterously it is made to work. For if God acts by a Necessity of Nature, that is, \* his own Nature, this ought to be matter of Joy and Comfort to the Good, and Terror to the Wicked. For it can signifie no more, than that God is necessarily Holy, Wise, Good, and Just, and cannot act otherwise than according to

|| *Diog. La-  
ert. in Ari-  
stotele.  
Metaphys.  
maj. c. 7.*

\* *Ipse enim est necessitas  
sua. Sen. Nat. Quaest.  
Praefat. 1. Non externa  
deus cogunt : sed sua illis  
in legem aeterna vo-  
luntas est. Sen. de Ben.  
l. 6. c. 23.*

to the Eternal Rules and Dictates of Holiness, Wisdom, Goodness, and Justice. What Good may not the

- Righteous expect from this? What Reason have not the Wicked, instead of triumphing, to tremble at it? And

\* *Nec ob hoc minus liber & potens est.* Sen ibid.  
N. Q. pr. 1.

with Respect to God, \* it infringes not his Liberty, it illustrates his Perfection.

IV. Nor are the general Arguments for God's Existence endanger'd by this Hypothesis; as you may see by the Enumeration of some Particulars.

I. We argue for God's Existence, from the Necessity of acknowledging a first Principle of Motion. Thus, Every Thing moving hath Motion either essential to it, or by Communication from another: That every Thing moving hath not Motion essential to it, is proved by the Cessation of Motion in some Things. or their Continuance in or Tendency unto Rest. And that a Body once quiescent would continue so for ever, if it was not moved by something else, is agreeable both to † *Aristotle's* Principles, and † *Cartes* his first Law of Nature; and indeed unto Common Sense. And if every Thing moving is moved by some-

† *Phys.* l. 8.  
c. 4.  
|| *Princip.*  
*Philosoph.*  
Part 2. Sect.  
37.

something else, 'tis necessary to stop somewhere, and, without \* going on *in infinitum*, to terminate in a first Mover. And since the first Mover must be † immovable, and therefore ‖ indivisible, impassible and without Parts, it must likewise be immaterial; and having an infinite Power of moving every thing else, 'tis what we believe of God. Nothing can pretend to answer this Argument, but the Invention of a perpetual Lamp or Motion; but all our Brains may be crack'd, and we may hope, by the Grace of God, to have the Truth of it confirm'd to our Comfort, before that Time comes. This, upon Review, will be found a very weighty Argument; very rationally making all the Motions in the Universe proceed from, terminate in, and directed by one Common Principle; which (like the Soul in the Body, the Spring and End of all Humane Motions) is the τὸ ἡγεμονικόν, the general Supervisor and Governour of all Things.

2. The Existence of God is proved by the Series and Gradation of Causes, in this manner.

E

Every

\* *Aristot.**Phys.* l. 8.

c. 5.

† *Cap. 6.*‖ *Ibid.* c. 10.*It. Plato de**Leg.* l. 10.& *Johannes**Gram. in**Aristot. de**Animâ.**Proœm.*

## Reason and Religion, &amp;c.

Every Thing which we see hath its Beginning and Production, must have its Beginning and Production from something else. Nothing can give Beginning to it self. Which is true, not only of those Things which we see produced, but of every Thing else from whence they have their Production, until we come unto some Cause which is not produced. \* An infinite Series of Causes is not to be admitted, unless you are resolved to be Contradiction-proof; for then, of two Infinites, one Rank may have infinitely more in number than the other: There may be every Day an Addition to what was infinite before, &c.

\* *Aristot.*  
*Metaphys.*  
*min. l. i. c. 2.*

'Tis certain, That Link which hath an End, must have a Beginning; That Train or Succession which hath a Last must have a First: And by these Steps we ascend to the Supreme Independent Cause from whence all subordinate Causes do proceed, and that is God.

3. The Existence of God is proved by the admirable Order and Beauty of the World; its visible Glories declaring his invisible Power and Godhead. Eternal Order can never be  
main-

maintain'd upon the Principles of Chance, but supposes an Eternal Orderer; by whose interposing Power and Wisdom, the Jarrings and Discords in Nature are over-ruled, every Part fixed in its proper Place, and guided most conduively to the Good and Harmony of the whole.

Take off your Eyes a little from this Earth of ours, and direct your Contemplations towards Heaven; Look up to the Sun, the Moon, and the rest of the Heavenly Hosts; Conjecture at their Magnitude, observe their Motion, thankfully reflect on their benign Influences; Consider how glorious Objects they all seem, what blessed Mansions some of them may prove to be. Have these existed, say you, Millions of Ages longer than most of us imagine? The more wonderful you make their Frame and Architecture, the greater Convictions (if possible) you give of an incomprehensibly wise and powerful Governour; the stronger Assurances against the Fear of a blind and fortuitous Causality. Chance, possibly, may hit upon something excellent, but it doth not last long. Coordinate and independent Powers may



associate for mutual Benefit and Defence, but it is much if they hold together to Eternity. 'Tis only one predominant and supremely excelling Principle, which can preserve a just Temperament, an eternal Tenour and Comeliness, a regular Union and Correspondence in all the Parts of the Universe, and this is GOD.

Shall we now proceed to the other Arguments for God's Existence, from the general Notion of God in the Mind, and the common Consent of Men to it, from the Fabrick of the Body, and the Nature and Operations of the Soul, from the several Ranks of Beings, which may lead to one most excellent and perfect: Rather peruse the learned Discourses already extant on those several Heads; apply them to, and see their Consistence with this Hypothesis, and by them, with the Intimations already given, you will soon perceive, that Men of Irreligious and Ungodly Principles only cheat themselves, when they think to hide themselves from God, under this Subtlety of the World's Eternity.

6. One Remark more, before the Conclusion of this Part, may be recommended

mended to you: That even upon this Hypothesis, the Generations of Men, in all Probability, must have a Beginning. And for this we will not repeat the Impossibility of infinite Successions, but re-mind you of Matters of Fact.

There are two Ways (this Hypothesis standing good) whereby the Inhabitants of the Earth may be all destroyed: Either by a general Destruction of our Vortex, whereof the Sun is the Center; or, by some particular Predominancy of Fire or Water.

I. A general Destruction of this Vortex may happen either by an Extinction of the Sun, or by an unequal Dispersion of its Rays and Heat.

1. If at any time there happen an Extinction of the Sun, all the Inhabitants in this Vortex (not removed by a supernatural Power) must needs perish, as under the Poles, for want of Light and Heat. The several Instances of a gathering Scum, over or near the Sun's Body, which, to us, have weaken'd or drowned the Sun's Light, and reduced it almost to a total Obscuration, may be foreboding Symptoms, and Comminations of such a

\* *Plin. Nat. Hist.* lib. 2.  
cap. 30.  
† *Phlegon. in Euseb. Chron. sub Tiberio.*  
*Ori-gen. Tract. on Matt. 35.*  
*Tertul. Apol. c. 21.*

Judgment. For a whole Year together, after the Assassination of *Julius Caesar*, there was a \* prodigious Failure of the Sun's Light; at other Times for several Months; and in the Reign † of *Tiberius* the most wonderful of all, tho' it was but for several Hours; as it were to blacken those Moments in the Records of Time wherein the Lord of Glory suffer'd.

If you think these Frowns of offended Nature signifie nothing; that these Threatnings of the great and only Potentate, to hide the most sensible and necessary Symbols of his Presence, have no Terror in them; or, to speak in the Language of our Naturalists, that these scummy Spots can never encrease into so great a quantity, as wholly to crust over the Body of the Sun, and extinguish the Light and Heat of it, let the disappearing of several Fix'd Stars, Bodies which might rival the Sun in Glory and Greatness, be a warning to you; and fear lest by the Encrease of Sin and Wickedness within our Sphere, the whole Mass to which we belong, be made one cursed and confus'd Heap, tumbled out of its Place, and become a Word of Reproach

proach and a Gazing-stock to the whole Universe, as || Comets are.

|| See *Cartes*  
his Account  
of Comets.  
*Princip.*  
*Philosoph.*  
Part 3. Sect.  
115, &c.

2. If there be at any time a breaking and unequal Dispersion of the Suns Heat, the irregular flying abroad of its fiery Particles, will consume every thing within the compass of it, and

\* *Pet. 3. 10.*  
12.

\* fulfil the Prediction of the Day of the Lord, when the Heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the Elements shall melt with fervent Heat. The Tradition of this World's perishing by an Universal Conflagration, hath Testimonies to confirm it on all sides. *S. Paul* may be supposed to have had some Skill in the Wisdom of the Heathens; but, that *S. Jude*, *S. John*, *S. Peter*, or our Saviour *Christ Jesus*, had the Perusal of *Plato*, *Cicero*, *Ovid*, *Berosus*, *Hermes Trismegistus*, *Democritus*, *Heraclitus*, either of their Works, Fragments, or Quotations from them, we have no Reason to perswade us: And yet they all agree in this Point, as if they spake by one common Inspiration. To sum up Evidences, will be doing what hath been sufficiently done already; but, for the more compendious finding them, consult the Commentators on *2 Pet. 3. 7.* and par-

† *Physiol.*  
*Stoic. l. 2.*  
*Dissert. 22.*  
 || *Consolat.*  
*ad Marti-*  
*am, ad fi-*  
*nem.*

particularly *Grotius*, and on 2 *Thes.* 2. 3. and particularly *Zanchy*: Or, if you are prejudiced against any Thing that may come near the Sacred Oracles, you may have Recourse to † *Lipsius*. You shall only have one Passage of || *Seneca*, whereby to guess at the rest. “ Fate with prodigious Fires shall burn  
 “ and consume all mortal Things;  
 “ and when the time shall come  
 “ wherein the World drawing near to  
 “ its Renovation shall expire, its several Parts shall dash one against another, Stars shall rush upon Stars, and  
 “ whatsoever now gives its Light with  
 “ Order and Beauty, shall with one  
 “ general Conflagration be set on fire.

II. There may be some particular Predominancy of Fire or Water, destructive to all Animals upon the Earth, tho’ the rest of our Vortex receive no Damage. And in reporting the general Tradition of the Worlds perishing, you may observe some Diversity among the Ancients: And besides the more universal Dissolution which we learn from them, and which you may interpret of all within the Compass of one or more Spheres; a particular Destruction, wherein only the

the Earth, with its Parts and Appurtenances, shall be concern'd, may be judged credible. Of this we may interpret that Passage of *Plato*, in his Book *De Regno*, "When all Animals  
 " had fulfilled the Task and Generations appointed to them, God withdraws his conserving Power, and  
 " retires from the Helm of Government. The Consequent of which;  
 " for that Vicissitude, is the Ruin of all Earthly Creatures. And the particular Manner of it is explain'd by the successive Dominations of Fire and Water, as in the celebrated Exprobration of the *Egyptian* || to  
*Solon*; " O *Solon, Solon*, you  
 " *Grecians* are always Children, nor have you Knowledge, of any ancient Date,  
 " among you. Which happens by  
 " many and various Destructions of  
 " Men, which have been, and will be,  
 " the greatest of which, by the Force  
 " of Fire and Inundations of Water,  
 " the lesser, by several other Chances  
 " and Calamities. As in the Circle of the Suns ordinary Course we have our Summer and Winter, so in the great Circle of Time, which they call

|| *Plato in Timæo. See also Celsus apud Origenem contra Celsum, l. 1. p. 16. Sen. Nat. Quæst. l. 3. c. 28.*



\* See *Alex.  
ab Ale-  
xandro, and  
Censorinus.*

the \* great Year, an extraordinary Summer and Winter are supposed to take their Turn; the one causing a general Conflagration, and the other a Deluge.

† *Moor's  
Myttery of  
Godliness.  
|| Cartes  
Princip.  
Phi. Part 3.  
Sect. 2.*

I. The Predominancy of Heat may proceed either from the altering of our Position with Respect to the Sun or some nearer Approximation to it, as some † suppose, or by the || Eruption of the Central Fire, or by both together. The first may prepare the way for the latter, by drying the Superficies of the Earth, making great Chinks and Chasms in it, and opening a sufficient Passage for the subterraneous Fires, to break out with all their Forces, to the Calcination of the whole. All Histories give us prodigious Examples of excessively hot Seasons, wherein such a Judgment might even naturally have been feared. We know what bituminous, sulphureous, and combustible Matter the Bowels of the Earth are replenish'd with, and what dangerous Eruptions they have made from their several Magazines, particularly in *Italy* and *Sicily*, and lately to the Consumption of a Hundred Thousand Persons; concerning which



which, we may use the Words of  
 \* *Pliny*, That they threaten Desolation \* *Nat. Hist.*  
 to the whole Earth: † which he had † *l. 2. c. 116.*  
 better have believ'd than have gone to † *Plin. Epist.*  
 see. From which Eruptions of the *l. 6. Ep. 16.*  
 Central Fire || *Cartes* is not asham'd to || *Princip.*  
 solve the appearing of some Stars *Philosoph.*  
 which never appear'd before. And *Part 3. Sect.*  
 if we can believe any Reality in his *104.*  
 Supposition, by such a Conspiracy of  
 external and internal Fires, the Vicis-  
 situdes appointed by the eternal De-  
 crees of Heaven may be compleated.  
 To this particular Exustion of the  
 Earth, and the Powers thereof, many  
 eminent Divines, both Ancient and  
 Modern, think fit to restrain the ge-  
 neral Expressions in Scripture, con-  
 cerning the Last Day. || *Mr. Mede* || *M de on*  
 seems zealous for it, and in him you *2 Pet. 3. 1,*  
 may find the best Collection of Autho- *2. inter ope-*  
 rities, to clear him from the perillous  
 Crime of Novelty. But our Business,  
 at present, is not to shew what may  
 be expected from Revelation, but Rea-  
 son. What is possible or probable be-  
 ing declared, we must leave to the  
 Choice of the Divine Wisdom what  
 Methods are most expedient for Cor-  
 recting the Vices of Mankind.

2. The Predominancy of Water will require but a very brief Discussion; both the Matter of Fact and Manner of an Universal Deluge, have of late been so learnedly managed, that you cannot need any References to Authority in this Case. You shall only be reminded of your Master *Aristotle*, || who had not Assurance enough to confront Tradition in so plain a Matter; but allowed, That as we have our successive Winters according to their Seasons, so in some fatal Times and Periods we might have a great Winter, and such Excess of Showers as might cause the Inundations reported by Antiquity.

|| *Aristot.*  
*Metaph.*  
L. 1. C. 14.

'Tis time now to shew, unto what all this tends; and to satisfy you, That all this Pains is not taken without some Prospect of Advantage: Which is no less than this;

That according to the Principles of these very Men who Eternize the World, 'tis highly probable, that Mankind have had a Beginning and a first of their Race upon the Earth. For,

First, If in less than the Compass of Six Thousand Years, we have had one, two, or three prodigious Deluges,

ges, How many such Calamities must the Earth have groaned under, if it have Existed from Eternity? For referring former Deluges to any Thing but an Eternal Cause, you suppose the Newness of the World, as though it wanted some accidental Shakings to bring it unto a perfect Settlement. And if in that great Deluge we have the most pregnant Proof of, only Eight Persons were saved alive, then in the innumerable Deluges which the Eternity of the Earth with its Inhabitants will suppose, sometimes 800 might be saved, sometimes 80, sometimes 8, and sometimes none at all. For, tho' the Eternal Causes may be regular in the general Production of a Deluge, they may not in Reason be thought so regular and uniform in every small Circumstance. And when the Condition of the Earth is brought to that deplorable State, that only Eightscore or Eight can escape, the saving of these few cannot be referred to the regular Operations of Nature, but either to Chance or Miracle. Miracle you will not chuse; and if only by Chance they escape once, in the Eternal Rollings and Revolutions of second Causes,

ses, 'tis more than probable, that one time or other they may chance to be all destroyed.

Secondly, And because the Predominancy of Fire and Water, according to your way of reckoning, seem to be successive, and that another universal Deluge cannot naturally be expected, till after a Conflagration, that may come in for a share in our present Meditations.

If any such opaque and heavy Bodies as the Earth is may be burnt up, we will not consider the means of their Renovation, but only the Possibility of such a Judgment's Coming to our Turn. And the Eternity of the Earth being supposed, there may have been as many Conflagrations as Deluges; and Fire being a much more Tyrannous Element than Water, if ever the Earth was burnt up by the Prevalency of Fire, (which if we can believe it Eternal, we may as well believe it happen'd Millions of Times) we cannot imagine any possible Way or Means (except miraculously) for one living Creature to escape.

The short of what we may infer from these two Particulars is, That either

either Mankind have had only one Beginning, which we Christians do believe; or, that they had an undeterminable Number of Beginnings, which you Heathens must believe: And then the Question between us will be only this, From whence? by what Forming Power they had their Beginning? And sure you will be ashamed to go back to *Epicurus*, and to the old ridiculous Fables of Mankind's creeping out of the Mudd and Slime of the Earth, enliven'd with the Suns Heat; having nothing to form and organize them, but blind Matter and Motion. This is an Absurdity so great, that the Opinion of Infinite Successions was invented on purpose to prevent it; your Patrons wisely resolving, that of two Evils or Absurdities, the least was to be chosen. Thus you are driven out of your Mudd and Matter to your Infinite Successions, and from Infinite Successions into the Mudd again; not knowing where to fix, unless the next Consideration will relieve you.

*Diod. Sic.*  
l. 1. *Lucret.*  
l. 2. 5.

Thirdly, If there be such Mutations in the Heavenly Bodies, as the appearance of Comets, the fresh appearing or disappearing

appearing of Fix'd Stars, are astonishing Indications and Signs of, why should not you think that the like Mutations have happen'd in our Sphere. In an Eternal Course of Ages, every thing that is possible may be expected. Suppose, according to your Laws of Nature, the Dissolution of one Sphere having a fix'd Star for the Centre, may happen in a Thousand Years, which is a very moderate Supposal, in the infinite Circle of Eternity, the same Fate might have<sup>e</sup> taken its Round innumerable Times. All the Hosts of Heaven, in their several Turns, might be broken and disbanded, and recall'd to their former Posts and Stations. And not to say how often it might happen to our Vortex, we will take only once for granted: And the Sun, the Moon, and all the Stars about us, having been in one confus'd Heap, without Life or Order, you may as well believe the Beginning which *Moses* speaks of, as any other. And tho' honest \* *Maimonides* was very zealous against the World's Eternity, and thought he could never muster up too many Arguments against it, as an Opinion which must inevitably over-turn the

\* *More Ne-  
vah.* p. 2.  
c. 25.







**Reason and Religion, &c.**

And now, O vain Men! What Refuge will you flee unto? There are no other possible Conceits for justifying your Infidelity. And since these will stand you in no stead at present, think within your selves, How much less serviceable they will be unto you at the Revelation of a more lightsome Day. Even in this mortal and obscure State, the Approaches of Death give the Irreligious other Eyes to see with. Danger dispels their Prejudices, and coming on the Brink of Eternity, they begin to think of God, of separate Spirits, and other Regions, when they cannot think of them with Comfort. Now they are apt to say, as the Cardinal to the Religious Hermit, What if there be no God, no Future State? But Diseases giving them notice of their Dissolution, the Answer of the good Father will be running in their Minds, What if there be? And is it not much the wisest and best Method, to live by those sacred Perswasions which probably you will dye in, especially when the great Patrons of Infidelity can say nothing against them. Nay, we have not so much as a Maybe left on our side, against the Verity  
of

of Religion: For, it cannot be that the World should either be Eternal or made by Chance. Or if one of those May-be's be granted, it cannot be that either Hypothesis should be exclusive of a Divine Nature or Providence. And if you are by these Considerations rendred (as you cannot but be) uneasy in Irreligion, and know not which way to turn, read over the former Part again with a pious Care and Attention, and it may prepare you for the following Advice; which, as the precedent Discourse, is intended, not for the reproaching, but reforming of your Judgment; not for the condemning of your Persons, but the Safety of your Souls; not to abridge you of any present Felicity, but to excite you to the Attainment of that which is Eternal.

III. So excellent a Subject ought not to be closed without some suitable Advice: And tho' the Knowledge of God, as it is the Foundation of all Religion, may have a general Reference to every Religious Duty; yet it will be fit to chuse out such particular Instances of Address, as the prevailing Vices and Inadvertency of this Age seem most in need of.

I. The

Psal. 14.

Psal. 111. 10.

Psal. 119. 98.

1 Tim. 6. 4.

1. The evident Connexion of Reason and Religion may direct us to a right Judgment of those Men who despise and undervalue Sacred Things: for hereby it appears, they despise and undervalue that which they do not understand. The Psalmist hath given us an excellent Character of such Men, *The fool hath said in his heart there is no God. They are corrupt and have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good. The Lord looked down from Heaven upon the children of Men, to see if there were any that did understand and seek after God:* Which is as much as to say, That it is the Ignorance and want of Understanding in Men, which makes them entertain any Scruples or Doubtfulness of Heart concerning God. The Acknowledgment of God is also affirm'd in Sacred Scripture, to be the Beginning of all Wisdom, and the Instructions of Religion the best way to perfect it. And he who consents not to the Doctrine which is according to Godliness, is expressly said to be a Fool and know nothing. 'Tis therefore a great Error in some, who set up for Men of extraordinary Parts and Wisdom, to speak Evil of Religious Matters:

ters : That Singularity in Profaneness  
 which they affect, and hope by its  
 Eminency will recommend them as  
 Persons of a deep Reach, is of all others  
 the most disgraceful. 'Tis an Argu-  
 ment, That really they do not see so  
 far into the Intricacies of Truth as they  
 would seem to do. Their Pretensions  
 are, in the Apostle's Stile, ἀντιθέται τῇς  
 σοφίας γνώσεως, the Oppositions of mis-  
 called Science ; and they only declare,  
 that there are a great many Things to  
 be said for Religion which they are  
 not aware of. Should any Man go  
 about to lessen the Eloquence of Cicero,  
 the Poetry of Virgil, the Morals of Se-  
 neca or Plutarch, he would only betray  
 his own Unskilfulness ; and his Cen-  
 sures would only render himself con-  
 temptible. The same we may say of  
 the Censurers of Religion. Let them  
 please themselves with a Conceit of  
 their own Wit : 'tis a Piece not only  
 of Charity, but Wisdom too, to im-  
 pute their Profaneness to want of Judg-  
 ment. Whatsoever they may fancy,  
 they are no better than Vulgar Mortals  
 guided by some Sensual or Popular  
 Prejudices, and a superficial View of  
 Things, through which they cannot  
 see

1 Tim. 6. 20.

see into the Excellencies of Religion.

II. If Reason and Religion go hand in hand, then you may safely be advised not to condemn or ridicule Religion, till you have carefully examined the Grounds and Reasons on which it is built.

Can any be a fairer, or more reasonable Request than this? Religion is not a Matter of so mean Importance, as to justify any trifling with it, or the Author of it. If any think to throw off the Fear of God with a scornful Jest, and look no further, it may (for ought they know) return again upon them with a serious Horror; and then they will wish, that they had formerly thought more of it. But if they will resolve to consider before they condemn, and try before they despise it, they will then indeed act like Men, and will presently find enough, if not absolutely to cure, yet at least to make them modest in their Mistakes. 'Tis an insufferable piece of Arrogance, for Men to talk against Religion, without enquiring into the Grounds on which its Reputation is supported. 'Tis a malicious Ignorance which makes such Scoffers: and 'tis enough to raise the Indig-

Indignation of any serious Christian, to see his dearest Interest trampled under-foot by those who never had any of its Notions in their Head. And pray, Observe the Persons generally accustom'd to vilifie Sacred Things; Are they Men to be depended on for their Seriousness? Do they seem to be more fixed in their Thoughts? more given to Contemplation than other Men? Or seem they not rather, Men of great Levity, and little Consideration? who mind only a few sensual and silly Satisfactions, and so entirely devoting their Thoughts that way, as though Reason was given them for no other end, but to make them Beasts with some better Grace and Solemnity. The Apostle takes notice of such Men in his Time, who cared not to retain God in their Knowledge; and he describes them to be such as professed themselves to be wise, but were really foolish, Men of a vain Imagination, and darkned in their foolish Heart. And it cannot be expected otherwise in this our Age. If Men give themselves up to Lightness and Vanity, 'tis no wonder if the substantial and serious Matters of our Belief do not relish well

Rom. 1.

28.

22.

21.



well with them. If they are commonly engaged in the Noise and Jollities of a licentious Life, this presently dislodges all Fixedness of Thought as a dull melancholick Thing ; and for their Ease from that Grievance, instead of sober Reasoning, they employ their Mind in idle and empty Talk ; instead of a Soul, calm, sedate, and well-composed for looking into Truth, they are hurried away with every ridiculous Humour and Frolick ; and instead of the Effects of a solid Judgment, nothing but Froth and Formality comes from them. And yet these are the Men, who inspite of their own Genius and Good Manners, must set up for the only Men of Sense and Judgment. They think they can see further in the Hurries and Distractions of a vicious Mind, than another in the most defecate and sober Temper : They think they can enlarge their Knowledge further in an instant, with the help of a little merry Company and a Bottle of Wine, than others can in many Years of Thoughtfulness, and most careful Meditation. And tho' the few Brains and Notions of Truth they had, are scatter'd in an airy and frolick-



frolicksome Conversation, yet they fancy themselves as well stocked with solid Arguments, as those who have made it their Business to collect the Evidences of Truth all their Lives. The Extravagances of such kind of Men, make them no very proper Managers of Humane Affairs. And why they should not forfeit their Reputation in the Concerns of a Divine Wisdom, which above all Things requires great Sobriety of Thought, can have a Reason given for it only by those who are willing, since it cannot be disputed, that the Cause of God should be laugh'd into Contempt.

Be entreated therefore, whoever reads this Book, to lay your Hands upon your Heart, and if any find themselves conscious of an Inclination or Humour to villifie Sacred Things, first to consider what you speak ill of, then upon what Grounds you do it; and by thus advising with your selves, or others whom you may think more exercised or fit to inform you in these Matters, you will find that Godliness is a Matter of great weight, and supported by many considerable Arguments

ments which before you thought not of: And so, by the Blessing of God, instead of Despising and Scoffing, you may be induced to give GOD that Honour which is due unto him.

III. If Religion and the Cause of God be so evidently accountable for, to the severest Reason, This may serve as a general Justification of all Zealous and Well-meaning Christians.

God Almighty doth variously distribute his Talents among the Sons of Men. To some Men God is pleased to give a still and contemplative Temper; and them he capacitates for to look into the hidden Things of his Law, and for returning a satisfactory Account thereof to the rest of the World. To some God is pleased to give a more warm and stirring Temper of Mind, a more vigorous and nimble Spirit; and these may be zealous and active for God, tho' they do not always give the best Reason and Demonstration for it. But however, by these Diversities of Operation and Temper in the Creature, in carrying in the Cause of God, the one supplies the Defectiveness of the other. 'Tis there-

therefore no sufficient Occasion of insult, in any Irreligious Person, if they find the Zeal of some plain and honest-hearted Christians to go beyond their Knowledge. Every one is not cut out for a Disputer, especially in such Matters which they could hardly ever have dream'd there should have been any Dispute about: And tho' God gives them inward Convictions of the Truth of those Heavenly Doctrines they are zealous for, yet they may not be prepared to encounter the Cavils and Objections which an Artist in Profaneness may raise up. God provides other Means and Instruments for that purpose; and they must not measure their Conquest by the Insufficiency of less Contemplative Christians, but by the Advantage they can gain over those (which will be but small) who have made it their Business to dive into the bottom of their unreasonable Objections.

'Tis customary with some Men, to furnish themselves with a few profane Cavils: And if they can but puzzle the Parson, or some honest-hearted Christian, \* *Illos exæquat victoria cælo*, \* *Lucret. l. 1.*

they think the Day is their own, and that Religion will never be able to lift up its Head more: Nay, sometimes when a Minister discourses very affectionately concerning the Fear of God and our Duty to him, concerning the Providence of God, and our Acknowledgment of it in many eminent Occurrences of Humane Life; concerning the Promises of Heaven, and the Terrors of Hell; such Men, who take themselves to be Men of no ordinary Parts and Judgment, are ready to indulge Themselves and their Neighbour with a scornful Smile. As if a Minister of the Gospel must be always laying the Grounds of Divinity, without making any further Progress in opening to the People the whole Counsel of God: As though none of his Auditory were deserving of his Regards but a Company of Desperadoes, who, like that horrible Monster in the Poet, are by vertue of no Exhortations or Arguments to be reduced from Vice: As though he must be shy of stirring up to Duty, of setting Life and Death, Blessings and Cursings before his Charge, because a great many, who  
care

*Juven.  
Sat. 4.*

care neither for him nor his Discourses, are not pleased with them. Rather than Religion shall be thus reason'd out of Countenance, let them laugh on still. 'Tis better they should despise and wander, than the Life of Piety in humbly disposed Christians should be check'd and perish. Let private Christians go on in their way, without being perplex'd at their Cavils; let godly Preachers remind their Flock of the Judgments of God, without respecting their Faces, or fearing their Disdain; and let all know, That as Religion in general, so its particular Doctrines are capable of very rational Proof, though on this or that Opportunity they have but little of it.

It would be well, if any thing which is spoken on this Subject, may as effectually over-awe the Rudeness as it doth discover the Ignorance of Irreligious Men; and make them more modest and suspicious of their own Judgment. 'Tis better for them to live under a Sense of God and his Judgments here, than feel the Effects of their wicked Folly and Confidence hereafter; and they have reason to be thank-

ful for the Kindness of those who will tell them plainly and affectionately, of the Nature and Purposes of God, of his Promises and Threatnings; since there are such Grounds for this Religious Zeal, as they, with all their Knowledge, are not able to oppose.

IV. The Reasonableness of Religion justifies the Provision in all wise and well-order'd States, for the suppressing of Profaneness and supporting Piety. The Honour of Government can never be consistent with the Dishonour of God: And how tolerable soever Differences in Religion may be, the Defiance of all Religion is not to be endured. The most rigorous Inquisition, or Enforcements to Uniformity, are preferable to that Indulgence, which permits the most impudent Infidelity to thrive and spread under its Shelter. The Sword of Authority is put into the Hands of Magistrates, for the Restraint of Ungodliness, and was employed by a Prince after God's own Heart, for rooting out all wicked Doers from the City of the Lord. Severity against Blasphemous Wretches is no Breach of Moderation,

deration, but a piece of Justice to the Government, of Charity to the Governed, and the Sufferers themselves can complain of no hard Usage thereby.

1. If very severe Laws were made and executed against the Profaners of Religion, What Obligation, either of Interest, Conscience, Generosity, or Good Manners, are any under, to bring themselves in danger of the Penalty?

If they, like the Fool in the Psalmist, say in their Heart, That there is no God, it is their Interest to conceal their Folly, and to wish none may be of that Opinion besides themselves. For by this means they have a Tye over all others, which others have not over them; and whether they are Masters or Servants, Parents or Children, Husbands or Wives, or in whatsoever worldly Commerce, Relations, or Business they are concern'd, the Belief of a superintending Deity will awe their Relatives to be faithful and affectionate, and discharge a good Conscience to them: A Privilege! which it is very much for their Ad-



vantage to preserve. Nor can Conscience engage them to make Profelites, by openly professing their Infidelity. Both the Laws of God, and the Laws of Man, the proper Rules of Conscience, dispose them to be silent: And if Conscience especially, as they say, be no other than the Bias of Education, we may hope none have so naughty an Education, as to think it their Duty, to disturb the Religious Impressions of Education or Conscience in other People. The most plau-

*Humana ante oculos se-  
de cum vita faceret. In  
s.rris oppressa gravi sub  
Religione, &c. Lucret.*

sible Pretext is, that of Generosity, Regard to Truth, and the Welfare of Mankind. It grieves them to see the World so basely enslaved to Religion, and Man's Life oppressed with Superstitious Fears or Fancies, drawing them off from the Comforts they might enjoy, or embittering their Enjoyment. But, alas! Unless we are perswaded of a Supream Governour and a Future State, the Life of Man hardly deserves our Notice: We are here to Day, and gone to Morrow; and it signifies little what different Perswasions Men are acted by,

by, what different Scenes they have passed through, when Death in a very little time will bring them to be all alike. If Men are now and then melancholick, 'tis no great matter; Some critical Turn of Humours in the Body, some favourable Frown of Nature, will give them their *Quietus*, and they will sooner find a Cure by the loss of Life than Religion. Besides, most of the Melancholly which Religious Men are infested with, is originally owing to the Contagion of wicked Company: From thence terrifying Doubts and Occasions of Disorder are suggested; from thence many unhappy Turns of Thought, which their holy Souls abhor, but cannot so easily get clear of again: So that instead of promoting the Ease and Welfare of Mankind, these wicked Renegadoes, in tempting Men from God, prove only the Instruments of their Torment. But, setting aside the Infirmities of Constitution, and some unfortunate Accidents, generally speaking, Religious Men have much the better of it, much the more comfortable and happy part even here on Earth: For

**Reason and Religion, &c.**

which we may appeal to Experience, and thereby acquaint these men of Honour and Generosity, that whether the Votaries of Religion are in the right or no; their condition is very comfortable, and it would be much more generous and good natured to let them go on in their own way. And if any thing of good Manners may be expected from these men, one would think they might make the Ostentations of their particular Improvements, give way to publick Constitution and Custom. If they are allowed to think themselves wiser than all the World, 'tis not fit they should make a noise of it, and fly in the face of the most Reverenc'd Establishments, meerly for a vain-glorious humour. But if neither the Palaces of Princes, nor the Laws of a State, nor the Solemnities of a City, nor the Consent of all grave and serious Men, nor the Awe of a People fearing God, the great Supports to the Reputation of Religion, can move them to any modest regards unto it; Can they wonder if their Impudence receives a check, and brings some Trouble upon  
itself

itself, by its presumptuous troubling of *Israel*? The rebating of their rudeness they must thank themselves for, and have no reason to complain, if their own perverseness punish them.

2. The interposal of Authority for the Punishment of these Evil doers, is a great piece of Charity. The longer they are suffered to go on with Impurity, the more will they be hardened in their Wickedness, and the further will their Venome spread. If the execution of good Laws against them be for any time deferred, they will think that Governours are like themselves: that they secretly believe as they do, tho' they do not so openly avow it. Connivance at their practise will argue consent to their Principle; and gives them more than a liberty, even the allowance of the State, to be as irreligious as they please. In the mean while the Souls of plain honest people are perplex'd, if not dangerously ensnared. The very Confidence of Infidels is enough to stagger their Faith; for it will be presumed, they durst not with so high a hand fight against God, unless they had well considered their strength,

strength, and on what grounds they engaged. Every honest Christian has not a stock of Reason to answer their Cavils: and where their Insinuations against God, do not entirely bring over to the Devils side, yet have we instances of many, in whose sides their deadly arrows have for a long time stuck, and even brought down their heads in sorrow to the Grave.

Oh ye Kings and Princes! Let the sighing and sad Estate of many poor Souls engage your Commiseration. Ye would be esteem'd the Fathers of your Country, the Defenders of the Faith, and the Refuge of the Distressed: Let all the World then see, You have some regard to the Characters which you assume, and avenge the Heritage of God of those Adversaries to their Internal and Eternal Peace, which go up and down in all Companies seeking whom they may surprize, distract and devour. Countenance not their reserved Impieties with your Favour, nor let your Justice spare them when they are bold and bare-fac'd: 'Tis better that Thousands such Wretches should be cut off, than that their  
Tongues

Tongues should be suffer'd to go through the World, corrupting others, speaking wicked Blasphemies, and talking at so abominable a rate against the Most High.

3. As Charity to others, so a just Regard to your selves, and the Stability of the Government, may require this of you. Many excellent Arguments there are, shewing the Necessity of maintaining Religion for maintaining the State; which the Adversaries of God are very sensible of, inveighing against Piety as the Invention of Politicians. This only at present all Kings and Princes ought to be put in mind of, That if they take no Care of Religion, in a little time, neither the Religious nor Irreligious will care much for them.

1. The Irreligious are Men for this present World, prepared indifferently for every new Stamp and Impression: Put them in the way of their Interest, and they are in their own Element, let the Government be what it will. Every Prospect of Danger holds them in Suspence; every

every Flood of Affairs which changes their Fortunes for the better, changes their Affection. To exclaim against Ingratitude and Baseness, are Words cast into the Air: From the Follies of Impiety springs the Wisdom of the World: Their Portion is in this Life, and they must make the best of it.

Princes are exposed to Dangers from abroad, and had need have some Trusty Friends and Counsellors at home: And a greater Advantage cannot a bordering Enemy have against any Prince, than when his People are poison'd with Infidelity. They are liable then to all Bribes and Corruption; and he that can give the best Pension, shall have the best Party. They become by degrees froward and high-grain'd; and if they have not their Revenge and Ambition, their Covetousness or Lusts, gratified to the full; if they are not humour'd in every thing, they begin to blow the Trumpet of Innovation, every Man to his Tents, leaving their Prince to shift for himself, while they think of new Measures.

The



The Character of Princes is never Sacred to them, but when it comes ready coin'd into their Pockets: Nor whatever they may pretend, would they prize the Liberties or Properties of any People, if it were not to preserve their own. So that nothing can secure their Fidelity, when once they are fallen from their Allegiance unto God: If you flatter your self, that some Doctrines are so ridiculous and absurd, that nothing can dispose them to further their Establishment, yea, in their Opinion, as Priests of all Religions are alike, so is likewise the Profession: and if they see things brought to a pinch, the little Tyes of Honour or Friendship will no longer hold them. Or, perchance, the Fear of Servitude, or the Loss of their Estates, may keep them steady to their Duty and the Service of their Prince: And, questionless, this, if any thing, will make them hearty against a Foreign Power, and excite them to run very great Adventures, rather than be ruin'd and tormented before their time. But when the Calentures of a State come

come near unto a Crisis, they begin to cast in their Minds, which is the strongest Side, and think it no small Artifice to save themselves by the Sacrifice of their Country. All Estates and Polities are alike to the Irreligious: Humour and Interest wind them variously about, and Governours may portend how they shall be served, by the Respect which is paid to God and his Service among their People.

2. The Religious deserve especial Consideration in the State, as Persons whose Affection and Fealty may be depended on: They esteem Government as the Ordinance, and Governours as the Ministers, of God: Liberty is never more grateful to them, nor Life on Earth more expressive of the Heavenly, than under the Protection of Pious Kings. They look upon their Authority with an obsequious Love and Reverence, and prosecute their Commands with Heartiness and Integrity. They fear no Diminution of their own Happiness from the encreasing Successes of their Royal Power; but believe the

the best of their Persons, hope the best from their Conduct, and endure all Things for their Sake. If the Number of such Persons at present be very few, the Religious Care of Governours, under the Divine Blessing, may add to them. But, when the Reins of Coercion are remitted unto blind Chance, and the Vermin of Corruption swarm abroad, and make no small Buz in the Sunshine of Security, what a melancholick Scene of Thought does this open to all well-disposed and serious Minds. Scepticism, in former Times, has been adjudged to merit the Scrutiny and Severities of the State; and all those flourishing Empires, the Records of whose Glory swell the Cheeks of Fame, have ever agrandiz'd themselves under the Banners of Piety: Vertue inspir'd their Solldiery with true Courage and Vigour, and Religion gave Reputation to their Arms. The World affords never an Instance of Triumphant Atheism: and if, through the Iniquity of the Times, and an extream Abhorrence of having Asses for Subjects,

jects, Irreligion be permitted to spread in the Camp and Council, in the City and Country, how great soever the Prince himself may be, the utmost such Toleration will prefer him to, is, in too large and literal a Sense, to be a King of Devils. Oh, the Reproach that such a Brood must bring upon a Church and Nation! and the Grief it must produce in all the Fearers of God, to hear the Hopes, the Author, the Means of their Salvation, so frequently blasphem'd! If it go on much further, being deliver'd over, for the Correction of our Sins, into the Hands of those Men whose Mercies are cruel, is the milder Judgment of the two. When a Nation is once sunk into the Dregs of Impiety, whatever Stirs or Commotions may fall out, whatever Changes in Government may succeed, there is some Hopes of its arising into a better State, no Fear of its growing worse. Calamity at least may reform their Manners, whom Prosperity had corrupted; and they may be induced to acknowledge God in his Judgments, who disdain his Mercy.

'Tis

'Tis highly behooveful therefore, for Governours, in securing Themselves to secure a Reverence for Religion: Because, Irreligion will break the Bonds of Love, Honour, and Fidelity, whereby Subjects are tied to their Authority; and a general Profaneness grieving the Hearts of the Religious, makes them indifferent unto the State that suffers it.

V. Since our Belief of God is so rationally grounded, from thence we may learn, not only the Folly, Rashness and Rudeness, but also the Inexcusableness of those Men, who live without the Sense of God in the World.

St. Paul affirms of the darkest *Acts 14. 17.* Times of Heathenism, that God did not leave himself without Witness; and that the Eternal Power and Godhead was manifested to them by *Rom. 1. 19,* the Things that were made; and <sup>20.</sup> from thence concludes them to be without Excuse. How much more inexcusable must such Men be in this our Age of Light, wherein the Advantages of the Gospel doth not only appear by the new Revelations made unto

unto us, but by improving our Rational Faculties, and enabling us to look more judiciously into the Frame and Laws of Nature, than they could before. If all the Light, which now shines among us, will not awaken the Drowsiness, remove the Wilfulness, work on the Infidelity of some Men; if they will still please themselves with Fancy and Vanity, with Shadows and Delusions, and prefer their own Darkness before this Light, their Sin hath all the heightning Aggravations it is capable of. And what can they answer unto God, for such their unreasonable Opposition to his Laws? for perverting the Excellencies of their own Mind, and abusing his Mercy, and turning the noblest Accomplishments of Humane Nature against the Author of them? What can they say, when God sets these Misdemeanours before their Eyes? when, to their own Shame and Confusion, they come to a Sense of their former Errors? when their Reason and Consciences (here drowned in Sottishness and Sensual Joys) shall be awaken'd, and the Revelation of the  
Great

Great Day, shall discover to them and to all the World, the Falsity and incorrigible Senselesness, the Incoherence and Weakness of those silly Arguments and Excuses wherein they prided themselves against God? This Time will come we need not doubt, but safely believe, O Heavenly Father, when the Tongues of thy Holy Ones shall turn unto thy Praise, and the Mouth of all Wickedness shall be stop'd.

Lastly, Since our Faith in God is not to be shaken by the strongest Reason, this may be a Matter of great Joy and Comfort unto all Faithful Christians, That God who made them and governs the World, will bear a continual Respect unto them; will reward all their pious Cares and Fears; will supply all their Weaknesses; will help them through all Temptations; will be with them in all their Conflicts and Strivings against Sin. They may boast themselves to be the only Wise-men; to build upon the wisest Expectations and Principles; to use the best means for their Everlasting Comfort,



fort, and for securing the Favour of their God, who is the best Friend. They may live in a joyful Perswasion of the Goodness of their God, and of his Intentions to make them happy; and may think within themselves, How when the Wicked shall not be able to stand in Judgment, the Lord will own them for his People, and glorifie their Faith, and receive them to an Eternal Communion with Himself and his Son Jesus Christ, in whom they trusted.

Be exhorted therefore and encouraged in the Apostle's Words, *Heb. 10. 35. &c. Cast not away your confidence in God, which hath great recompense of Reward:* For yet, a little while the Lord will come, and will not tarry: And if like Just Men ye live by Faith, and continue Faithful unto Death, the Lord will raise you up in Likeness to the Glory of his Son, and give you a Crown of Life. If you believe in God, and make towards Heaven, the Place of his Abode, with heavenly Hearts and Affections, you will find that you are not deceived

ceived in your Faith; the God in whom you believe, being a Rewarder of all those who diligently seek him. *Heb. 11. 6.*

*To whom be Glory and Obedience  
for ever and ever. Amen.*

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**F I N I S.**

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